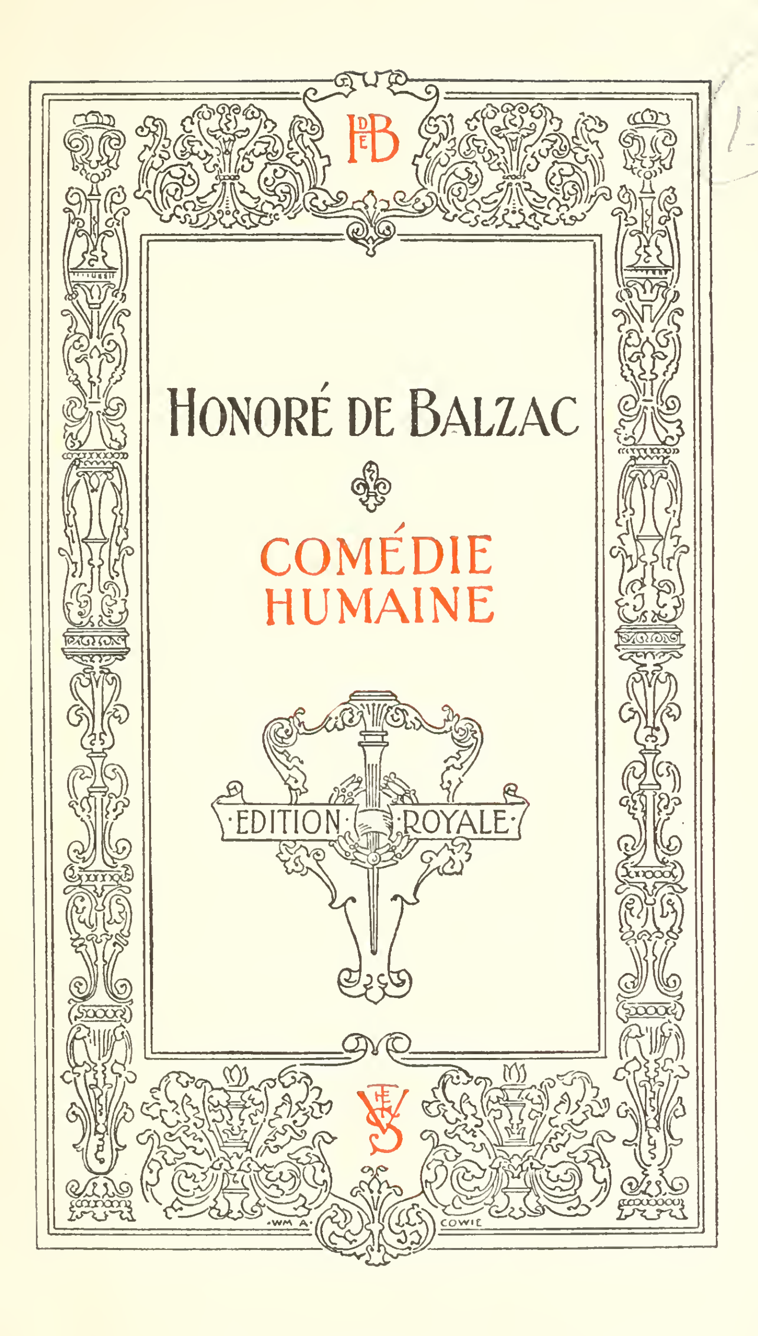
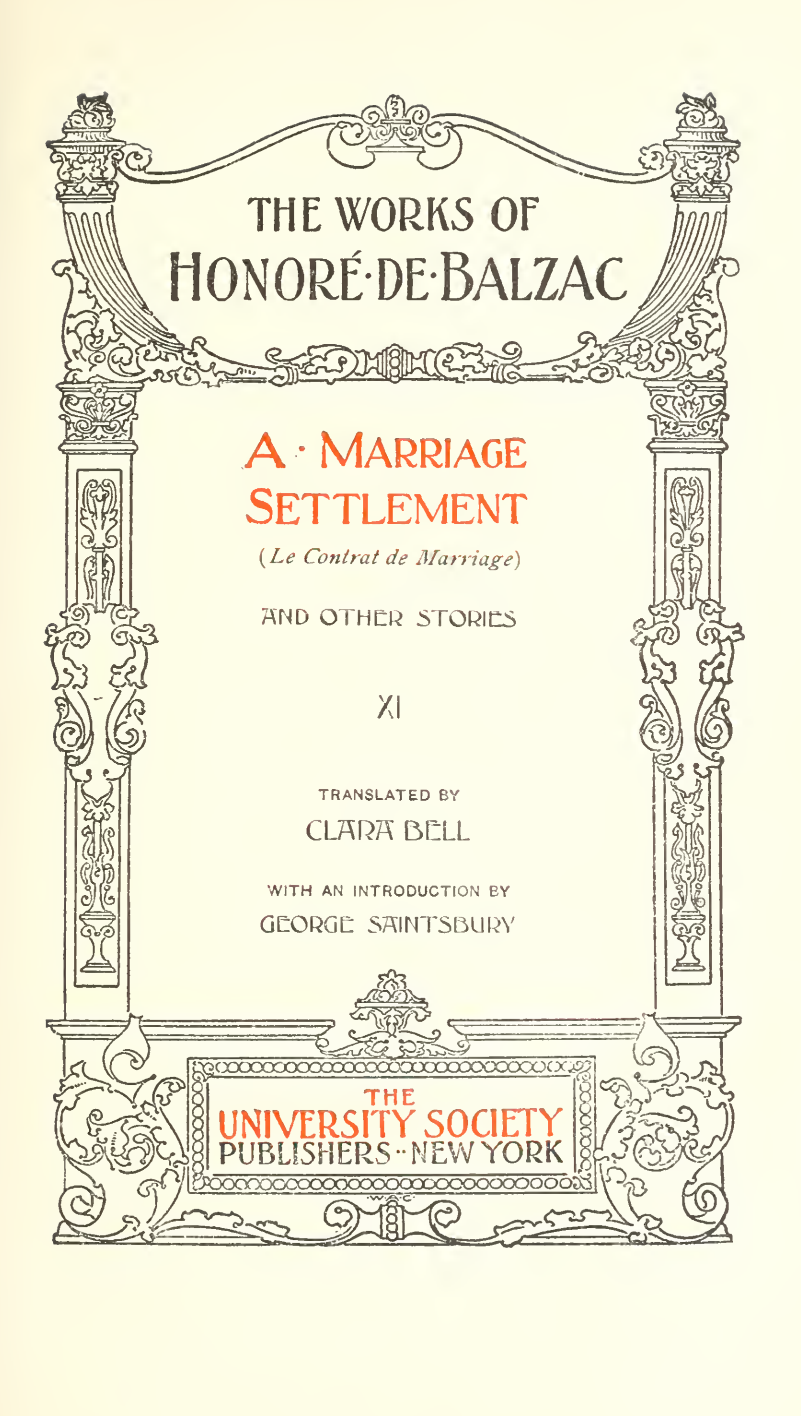



HONORÉ DE BALZAC
COMÉDIE HUMAINE
·EDITION· ·ROYALE·
·WM A· COWIE


VNCLE · CARDOT ·

Uncle Cardot
—*A Start in Life*, page 254





THE WORKS OF

HONORÉ·DE·BALZAC

A · MARRIAGE SETTLEMENT

(*Le Contrat de Marriage*)

AND OTHER STORIES

XI

TRANSLATED BY

CLARA BELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

THE
UNIVERSITY SOCIETY
PUBLISHERS · NEW YORK

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

PHOTOGRAVURES

A MARRIAGE SETTLEMENT

AND OTHER STORIES

INTRODUCTION

If Balzac had been acquainted with the works of Chaucer (which would have been extremely surprising) he might have called *Le Contrat de Mariage* "A Legend of Bad Women." He has not been exactly sparing of studies in that particular kind; but he has surpassed himself here. Mme. de Maufrigneuse redeems herself by her character, however imperfectly supported, of *grande dame*, Béatrix de Rochefide by a certain naturalness and weakness, Flore Brazier by circumstances and education, others by other things. But Madame Evangelista and her daughter Natalie may be said to be bad all through—thoroughly poisonous persons who, much more than the actual Milady of *Les Trois Mouspuetaires* (there was some charm in her), deserved to be taken and "justified" by lynch law. If the "Thirteen" (who were rather interested in the matter) had descended upon both in the fashion of d'Artagnan and his friends, I do not know that any one would have had much right to complain. How far the picture is exaggerated must be a question to be decided partly by individual experience, partly by other arguments. Although I am not always disposed to defend Balzac from the charge of exaggeration, I think he is fairly free from it here.

Madame Evangelista, besides the usual womanly desire to make a figure in the capital, has (not to excuse, but to explain her) the equally natural tendency to regard everybody outside her own family as an at least possible enemy to be

"exploited" pitilessly, together with bad blood which, though luckily not common, is by no means impossible nor even extremely rare. Her daughter, as Balzac has acutely suggested, both here and elsewhere, is, like not a few women, destitute of that sense of abiding gratitude for pleasure mutually enjoyed which tempers the evil tendencies of the male sex to no considerable extent. She has never cared for her husband; she has no morals; and (as in another book and subject, her letter to Félix de Vandenesse, well deserved as it is in the particular instance, shows) she has the fortunately not universal but excessively dangerous combination of utter selfishness with very clear-sighted common-sense.

The men are equally true, and much more agreeable. It is noteworthy that here only does Balzac's pattern Byronic dandy Marsay cut a distinctly agreeable figure. He is still something of a coxcomb, but he is, as he is not very often, a gentleman; he is, as he is scarcely ever, a good fellow; and he deserves his character as *un homme très fort,* to say the least, better than he does in some places. The two family lawyers are excellent. As for Paul de Manerville, the unfortunate *fleur des pois* (the title for some time of the book) himself, he is one of the profoundest of Balzac's studies, and it was perhaps rather unkind of his creator to call him a *niais.* At any rate, he was not more so than that very creator when he committed slow suicide by waiting and working till a woman, who cannot have been worth the trouble, at last made up her mind to "derogate" a little, and, without any pecuniary sacrifice, to exchange the position of widow of a member of a second-rate aristocracy for that of wife of one of the foremost living men of letters in Europe, who was himself technically a gentleman. Marsay's letters to Paul only put pointedly what the whole story puts suggestively, the

great truth that you may "see life" without knowing it, and that for a certain kind of respectable person the sowing of wild oats is a far more dangerous kind of husbandry than for the wildest profligate. It is true that Paul has exceedingly bad luck, and that in countries other than France he might have subsided into a most respectable and comfortable country gentleman. But as a great authority, whom he probably knew, Paul de Florac, his namesake and contemporary, remarked, "Do not adopt our institutions *à demi*," so it would seem to be a maxim that the two kinds of life cannot be combined—at least, that seems to be Balzac's moral.

The second story in the volume, a very slight touch of unnecessary cruelty excepted, is one of the truest and most amusing of all Balzac's *repertoire;* and it is conducted according to the orthodox methods of poetical justice. It is impossible not to recognize the justice of the portraiture of the luckless Oscar Husson, and the exact verisimilitude of the way in which he succumbs to the temptations and practical jokes (the first title of the story was *Le Danger des Mystifications*) of his companions. I am not a good authority on matters dramatic; but it seems to me that the story would lend itself to the stage in the right hands better than almost anything that Balzac has done. Half an *enfant terrible* and half a Sir Martin Mar-all, the luckless Oscar "puts his foot into it," and emerges in deplorable condition, with a sustained success which would do credit to all but the very best writers of farcical comedy, and would not disgrace the very best.

In such pieces the characters other than the hero have but to play contributory parts, and here they do not fail to do so. M. de Sérizy, whom it pleased Balzac to keep in a dozen books as his stock example of the unfortunate husband, plays

his part with at least as much dignity as is easily possible to such a personage. Madame Clapart is not too absurd as the fond mother of the cub; and Moreau, her ancient lover, is equally commendable in the not very easy part of a "protector." The easy-going ladies who figure in Oscar's second collapse display well enough that rather facile generosity and good-nature which Balzac is fond of attributing to them. As for the "Mystificators," Balzac, as usual, is decidedly more lenient to the artist folk than he is elsewhere to men of letters. Mistigris, or Léon de Lora, is always a pleasant person, and Joseph Bridau always a respectable one. Georges Marest is no doubt a bad fellow, but he gets punished.

Nor ought we to omit notice of the careful study of the apprenticeship of a lawyer's clerk, wherein, as elsewhere no doubt, Balzac profited by his own novitiate. Altogether the story is a pleasant one, and we acquiesce in the tempering of the wind to Oscar when that ordinary person is consoled for his sufferings with the paradise of the French bourgeois —a respectable place, a wife with no dangerous brilliancy, and a good *dot.*

Une Double Famille, which had an almost unusually complicated history and several titles, appears here (for reasons of practical convenience) out of its old place in conjunction with the *Chat qui Pelote.* It is a good specimen of Balzac's average work, neither much above nor much below the run of its fellows.

The first titles of the two main stories have been given above. *La Fleur des pois,* as such, appeared in no newspaper, but in the *Scènes de la Vie Privée* of 1834-35. It had three divisions, which disappeared in the first edition of the *Comédie,* when also the title was changed. Its companion was printed under its first title, and with fourteen chapter divi-

sions, in a paper called *La Législature,* between July and September 1842. Balzac at first meant to call it *Les Jeunes Gens,* but changed this to *Le Danger des Mystifications,* and that again to the present form, when it appeared (with *La fausse Maîtresse*) as a book in 1844. Next year it was classed in the *Comédie,* undergoing the usual process of deletion of the chapter divisions and headings.

G. S.

A MARRIAGE SETTLEMENT

To G. Rossini

MONSIEUR DE MANERVILLE the elder was a worthy gentleman of Normandy, well known to the Maréchal de Richelieu, who arranged his marriage with one of the richest heiresses of Bordeaux at the time when the old Duke held court in that city as Governor of Guienne. The Norman gentleman sold the lands he owned in Bessin, and established himself as a Gascon, tempted to this step by the beauty of the estate of Lanstrac, a delightful residence belonging to his wife. Towards the end of Louis XV.'s reign, he purchased the post of Major of the King's bodyguard, and lived till 1813, having happily survived the Revolution.

This was how. In the winter of 1790 he made a voyage to Martinique, where his wife had property, leaving the management of his estates in Gascony to a worthy notary's clerk named Mathias, who had some taint of the new ideas. On his return, the Comte de Manerville found his possessions safe and profitably managed. This shrewdness was the fruit of a graft of the Gascon on the Norman.

Madame de Manerville died in 1810. Her husband, having learned by the dissipations of his youth the importance of money, and, like many old men, ascribing to it a greater power in life than it possesses, Monsieur de Manerville became progressively thrifty, avaricious, and mean. Forgetting that stingy fathers make spendthrift sons, he allowed scarcely anything to his son, though he was an only child.

Paul de Manerville came home from college at Vendôme towards the end of 1810, and for three years lived under his father's rule. The tyranny exercised by the old man of sixty-

nine over his sole heir could not fail to affect a heart and character as yet unformed. Though he did not lack the physical courage which would seem to be in the air of Gascony, Paul dared not contend with his father, and lost the elasticity of resistance that gives rise to moral courage. His suppressed feelings were pent at the bottom of his heart, where he kept them long in reserve without daring to express them; thus, at a later time, when he felt that they were not in accordance with the maxims of the world, though he could think rightly, he could act wrongly. He would have fought at a word, while he quaked at the thought of sending away a servant; for his shyness found a field in any struggle which demanded persistent determination. Though capable of much to escape persecution, he would never have taken steps to hinder it by systematic antagonism, nor have met it by a steady display of strength. A coward in mind, though bold in action, he preserved till late that unconfessed innocence which makes a man the victim, the voluntary dupe, of things against which such natures hesitate to rebel, preferring to suffer rather than complain.

He was a prisoner in his father's old house, for he had not money enough to disport himself with the young men of the town; he envied them their amusements, but could not share them. The old gentleman took him out every evening in an antique vehicle, drawn by a pair of shabbily-harnessed horses, attended to by two antique and shabbily-dressed men-servants, into the society of a royalist clique, consisting of the waifs of the nobility of the old Parlement and of the sword. These two bodies of magnates, uniting after the Revolution to resist Imperial influence, had by degrees become an aristocracy of landowners. Overpowered by the wealth and the shifting fortunes of a great seaport, this *Faubourg Saint-Germain* of Bordeaux responded with scorn to the magnificence of commerce and of the civil and military authorities.

Too young to understand social distinctions and the poverty hidden under the conspicuous vanity to which they give rise, Paul was bored to death among these antiques, not knowing

that these associations of his youth would secure to him the aristocratic pre-eminence for which France will always have a weakness.

He found some little compensation for the dreariness of these evenings in certain exercises such as young men love, for his father insisted on them. In the old aristocrat's eyes, to be a master of all weapons, to ride well, to play tennis, and have fine manners—in short, the superficial training of the gentleman of the past—constituted the accomplished man. So, every morning Paul fenced, rode, and practised with pistols. The rest of his time he spent in novel-reading, for his father would not hear of the transcendental studies which put a finishing touch to education in these days.

So monotonous an existence might have killed the young man, but that his father's death delivered him from this tyranny at the time when it was becoming unendurable. Paul found that his father's avarice had accumulated a considerable fortune, and left him an estate in the most splendid order possible; but he had a horror of Bordeaux, and no love for Lanstrac, where his father had always spent the summer and kept him out shooting from morning till night.

As soon as the legal business was got through, the young heir, eager for pleasure, invested his capital in securities, left the management of the land to old Mathias, his father's agent, and spent six years away from Bordeaux. Attaché at first to the Embassy at Naples, he subsequently went as secretary to Madrid and London, thus making the tour of Europe. After gaining knowledge of the world, and dissipating a great many illusions, after spending all the money his father had saved, a moment came when Paul, to continue this dashing existence, had to draw on the revenues from his estate which the notary had saved for him. So, at this critical moment, struck by one of those impulses which are regarded as wisdom, he resolved to leave Paris, to return to Bordeaux, to manage his own affairs, to lead the life of a country gentleman, settling at Lanstrac and improving his estate—to marry, and one day to be elected Deputy.

Paul was a Count; titles were recovering their value in the matrimonial market; he could, and ought to marry well Though many women wish to marry for a title, a great many more look for a husband who has an intimate acquaintance with life. And Paul—at a cost of seven hundred thousand francs, consumed in six years—had acquired this official knowledge, a qualification which cannot be sold, and which is worth more than a stockbroker's license; which, indeed, demands long studies, an apprenticeship, examinations, acquaintances, friends, and enemies, a certain elegance of appearance, good manners, and a handsome, tripping name; which brings with it success with women, duels, betting at races, many disappointments, dull hours, tiresome tasks, and indigestible pleasures.

In spite of lavish outlay, he had never been the fashion. In the burlesque army of the gay world, the man who is *the fashion* is the Field Marshal of the forces, the merely elegant man is the Lieutenant-General. Still, Paul enjoyed his little reputation for elegance, and lived up to it. His servants were well drilled, his carriages were approved, his suppers had some success, and his bachelor's den was one of the seven or eight which were a match in luxury for the finest houses in Paris. But he had not broken a woman's heart; he played without losing, nor had he extraordinarily brilliant luck; he was too honest to be false to any one, not even a girl of the streets; he did not leave his love-letters about, nor keep a boxful for his friends to dip into while he was shaving or putting a collar on; but, not wishing to damage his estates in Guienne, he had not the audacity that prompts a young man into startling speculations, and attracts all eyes to watch him; he borrowed of no one, and was so wrongheaded as to lend to friends, who cut him and never mentioned him again, either for good or evil. He seemed to have worked out the sum of his extravagance. The secret of his character lay in his father's tyranny, which had made him a sort of social hybrid.

One morning Paul de Manerville said to a friend of his named de Marsay, who has since become famous:

"My dear fellow, life has a meaning."

"You must be seven-and-twenty before you understand it," said de Marsay, laughing at him.

"Yes, I am seven-and-twenty, and for that very reason I mean to go to live at Lanstrac as a country gentleman. At Bordeaux I shall have my father's old house, whither I shall send my Paris furniture, and I shall spend three months of every winter here in my rooms, which I shall not give up."

"And you will marry?"

"I shall marry."

"I am your friend, my worthy Paul, as you know," said de Marsay, after a moment's silence; "well, be a good father and a good husband—and ridiculous for the rest of your days. If you could be happy being ridiculous, the matter would deserve consideration; but you would not be happy. You have not a strong enough hand to rule a household. I do you every justice: you are a perfect horseman; no one holds the ribbons better, makes a horse plunge, or keeps his seat more immovably. But, my dear boy, the paces of matrimony are quite another thing. Why, I can see you led at a round pace by Madame la Comtesse de Manerville, galloping, more often than not much against your will, and presently thrown —thrown into the ditch, and left there with both legs broken.

"Listen to me. You have still forty odd thousand francs a year in land in the Department of the Gironde. Take your horses and your servants, and furnish your house in Bordeaux; you will be King in Bordeaux, you will promulgate there the decrees we pronounce in Paris, you will be the corresponding agent of our follies. Well and good. Commit follies in your provincial capital—nay, even absurdities. So much the better; they may make you famous. But—do not marry.

"Who are the men who marry nowadays? Tradesmen, to

increase their capital or to have a second hand at the plough; peasants, who, by having large families, manufacture their own laborers; stockbrokers or notaries, to get money to pay for their licenses; the miserable kings, to perpetuate their miserable dynasties. We alone are free from the pack-saddle; why insist on loading yourself? In short, what do you marry for? You must account for such a step to your best friend.

"In the first place, if you should find an heiress as rich as yourself, eighty thousand francs a year for two are not the same thing as forty thousand for one, because you very soon are three—and four if you have a child. Do you really feel any affection for the foolish propagation of Manervilles, who will never give anything but trouble? Do you not know what the duties are of a father and mother? Marriage, my deal Paul, is the most foolish of social sacrifices; our children alone profit by it, and even they do not know its cost till their horses are cropping the weeds that grow over our graves.

"Do you, for instance, regret your father, the tyrant who wrecked your young life? How do you propose to make your children love you? Your plans for their education, your care for their advantage, your severity, however necessary, will alienate their affection. Children love a lavish or weak father, but later they will despise him. You are stranded between aversion and contempt. You cannot be a good father for the wishing.

"Look round on our friends, and name one you would like for a son. We have known some who were a disgrace to their name. Children, my dear boy, are a commodity very difficult to keep sweet.—Yours will be angels! No doubt!

"But have you ever measured the gulf that parts the life of a single man from that of a married one? Listen.—As you are, you can say: 'I will never be ridiculous beyond a certain point; the public shall never think of me excepting as I choose that it should think.' Married, you will fall into depths of the ridiculous!—Unmarried, you make your own happiness; you want it to-day, you do without to-morrow: married, you take it as it comes, and the day you seek it you have to do

without it. Married, you are an ass; you calculate marriage portions, you talk about public and religious morality, you look upon young men as immoral and dangerous; in short, you are socially Academical. I have nothing but pity for you! An old bachelor, whose relations are waiting for his money, and who struggles with his latest breath to make an old nurse give him something to drink, is in paradise compared with a married man. I say nothing of all the annoying, irritating, provoking, aggravating, stultifying, worrying things that may come to hypnotize and paralyze your mind, and tyrannize over your life, in the course of the petty warfare of two human beings always together, united for ever, who have bound themselves, vainly believing that they will agree; no, that would be to repeat Boileau's satire, and we know it by heart.

"I would forgive you the absurd notion if you would promise to marry like a grandee, to settle your fortune on your eldest son, to take advantage of the honeymoon stage to have two legitimate children, to give your wife a completely separate establishment, to meet her only in society, and never come home from a journey without announcing your return. Two hundred thousand francs a year are enough to do it on, and your antecedents allow of your achieving this by finding some rich English woman hungering for a title. That aristocratic way of life is the only one that seems to me truly French; the only handsome one, commanding a wife's respect and regard; the only life that distinguishes us from the common herd; in short, the only one for which a young man should ever give up his single blessedness. In such an attitude the Comte de Manerville is an example to his age, he is superior to the general, and must be nothing less than a Minister or an Ambassador. He can never be ridiculous; he conquers the social advantages of a married man, and preserves the privileges of a bachelor."

"But, my good friend, I am not a de Marsay; I am, as you yourself do me the honor to express it, Paul de Manerville, neither more nor less, a good husband and father,

Deputy of the Centre, and perhaps some day a peer of the Upper House—altogether a very humble destiny. But I am diffident—and resigned."

"And your wife?" said the merciless de Marsay, "will she be resigned?"

"My wife, my dear fellow, will do what I wish."

"Oh! my poor friend, have you not got beyond that point?—Good-bye, Paul. Henceforth you have forfeited my esteem. Still, one word more, for I cannot subscribe to your abdication in cold blood. Consider what is the strength of our position. If a single man had no more than six thousand francs a year, if his whole fortune lay in his reputation for elegance and the memory of his successes, well, even this fantastic ghost has considerable value. Life still affords some chances for the bachelor 'off color.' Yes, he may still aspire to anything. But marriage! Paul, it is the 'Thus far and no further' of social existence. Once married, you can never more be anything but what you are—unless your wife condescends to take you in hand."

"But you are always crushing me under your exceptional theories!" cried Paul. "I am tired of living for the benefit of others—of keeping horses for display, of doing everything with a view to 'what people will say,' of ruining myself for fear that idiots should remark: 'Why, Paul has the same old carriage!—What has he done with his money? Does he squander it? Gamble on the Bourse?—Not at all; he is a millionaire. Madame So-and-So is madly in love with him.—He has just had a team of horses from England, the handsomest in Paris.—At Longchamps, every one remarked the four-horse chaises of Monsieur de Marsay and Monsieur de Manerville; the cattle were magnificent.'—In short, the thousand idiotic remarks by which the mob of fools drives us.

"I am beginning to see that this life, in which we are simply rolled along by others instead of walking on our feet, wears us out and makes us old. Believe me, my dear Henri, I admire your powers, but I do not envy you. You are capable of judging everything; you can act and think as a statesman,

you stand above general laws, received ideas, recognized prejudices, accepted conventionalities; in fact, you get all the benefits of a position in which I, for my part, should find nothing but disaster. Your cold and systematic deductions, which are perhaps quite true, are, in the eyes of the vulgar, appallingly immoral. I belong to the vulgar.

"I must play the game by the rules of the society in which I am compelled to live. You can stand on the summit of human things, on ice peaks, and still have feelings; I should freeze there. The life of the greatest number, of which I am very frankly one, is made up of emotions such as I feel at present in need of. The most popular lady's man often flirts with ten women at once, and wins the favor of none; and then, whatever his gifts, his practice, his knowledge of the world, a crisis may arise when he finds himself, as it were, jammed between two doors. For my part, I like the quiet and faithful intercourse of home; I want the life where a man always finds a woman at his side."

"Marriage is a little free and easy!" cried de Marsay.

Paul was not to be dashed, and went on:

"Laugh if you please; I shall be the happiest man in the world when my servant comes to say, 'Madame is waiting breakfast'—when, on coming home in the afternoon, I may find a heart——"

"You are still too frivolous, Paul! You are not moral enough yet for married life!"

"A heart to which I may confide my business and tell my secrets. I want to live with some being on terms of such intimacy that our affection may not depend on a *Yes* or *No,* or on situations where the most engaging man may disappoint passion. In short, I am bold enough to become, as you say, a good husband and a good father! I am suited to domestic happiness, and prepared to submit to the conditions insisted on by society to set up a wife, a family——"

"You suggest the idea of a beehive.—Go ahead, then. You will be a dupe all your days. You mean to marry, to

have a wife to yourself? In other words, you want to solve, to your own advantage, the most difficult social problem presented in our day by town life as the French Revolution has left it, so you begin by isolation! And do you suppose that your wife will be content to forego the life you contemn? Will she, like you, be disgusted with it? If you do not want to endure the conjugal joys described by your sincere friend de Marsay, listen to my last advice. Remain unmarried for thirteen years longer, and enjoy yourself to the top of your bent; then, at forty, with your first fit of the gout, marry a widow of six-and-thirty; thus you may be happy. If you take a maid to wife, you will die a madman!"

"Indeed! And tell me why?" cried Paul, somewhat nettled.

"My dear fellow," replied de Marsay, "Boileau's Satire on Women is no more than a series of commonplace observations in verse. Why should women be faultless? Why deny them the heritage of the most obvious possession of human nature? In my opinion, the problem of marriage no longer lies in the form in which that critic discerned it. Do you really suppose that, to command affection in marriage, as in love, it is enough for a husband to be a man? You who haunt boudoirs, have you none but fortunate experiences?

"Everything in our bachelor existence prepares a disastrous mistake for the man who marries without having deeply studied the human heart. In the golden days of youth, by a singular fact in our manners, a man always bestows pleasure, he triumphs over fascinated woman, and she submits to his wishes. The obstacles set up by law and feeling, and the natural coyness of woman, give rise to a common impulse on both sides, which deludes superficial men as to their future position in the married state where there are no obstacles to be overcome, where women endure rather than allow a man's advances, and repel them rather than invite them. The whole aspect of life is altered for us. The unmarried man, free from care, and always the leader, has nothing to fear from a defeat. In married life a repulse is irreparable. Though a

lover may make a mistress change her mind in his favor, such a rout, my dear boy, is Waterloo to a husband. A husband, like Napoleon, is bound to gain the victory; however often he may have won, the first defeat is his overthrow. The woman who is flattered by a lover's persistency, and proud of his wrath, calls them brutal in a husband. The lover may choose his ground and do what he will, the master has no such license, and his battlefield is always the same.

"Again, the struggle is the other way about. A wife is naturally inclined to refuse what she ought; a mistress is ready to give what she ought not.

"You who wish to marry (and who will do it), have you ever duly meditated on the Civil Code? I have never soiled my feet in that cave of commentary, that cockloft of gabble called the Law Schools; I never looked into the Code, but I see how it works in the living organism of the world. I am a lawyer, as a clinical professor is a doctor. The malady is not in books, it is in the patient.—The Code, my friend, provides women with guardians, treats them as minors, as children. And how do we manage children? By fear. In that word, my dear Paul, you have the bit for the steed.—Feel your pulse, and say: Can you disguise yourself as a tyrant; you who are so gentle, so friendly, so trusting; you whom at first I used to laugh at, and whom I now love well enough to initiate you into my science. Yes, this is part of a science to which the Germans have already given the name of Anthropology.

"Oh! if I had not solved life by means of pleasure, if I had not an excessive antipathy for men who think instead of acting, if I did not despise the idiots who are so stupid as to believe that a book may live, when the sands of African deserts are composed of the ashes of I know not how many unknown Londons, Venices, Parises, and Romes now in dust, I would write a book on modern marriages and the influence of the Christian system; I would erect a beacon on the heap of sharp stones on which the votaries lie who devote themselves to the social *multiplicamini*. And yet—is the human race worth a

quarter of an hour of my time? Is not the sole rational use of pen and ink to ensnare hearts by writing love letters?

"So you will introduce us to the Comtesse de Manerville?"

"Perhaps," said Paul.

"We shall still be friends?" said de Marsay.

"Sure!" replied Paul.

"Be quite easy; we will be very polite to you, as the Maison Rouge were to the English at Fontenoy."

Though this conversation shook him, the Comte de Manerville set to work to carry out his plans, and returned to Bordeaux for the winter of 1821. The cost at which he restored and furnished his house did credit to the reputation for elegance that had preceded him. His old connections secured him an introduction to the Royalist circle of Bordeaux, to which, indeed, he belonged, alike by opinion, name, and fortune, and he soon became the leader of its fashion. His knowledge of life, good manners, and Parisian training enchanted the Faubourg Saint-Germain of Bordeaux. An old marquise applied to him an expression formerly current at Court to designate the flower of handsome youth, of the dandies of a past day, whose speech and style were law; she called him *la fleur des pois*—as who should say Pease-blossom. The Liberal faction took up the nickname, which they used in irony, and the Royalists as a compliment.

Paul de Manerville fulfilled with glory the requirements of the name. He was in the position of many a second actor; as soon as the public vouchsafes some approval, they become almost good. Paul, quite at his ease, displayed the qualities of his defects. His banter was neither harsh nor bitter, his manners were not haughty; in his conversation with women, he expressed the respect they value without too much deference or too much familiarity. His dandyism was no more than an engaging care for his person; he was considerate of rank; he allowed a freedom to younger men which his Paris

experience kept within due limits; though a master with the sword and pistol, he was liked for his feminine gentleness.

Then his medium height, and a figure not lean but not yet rotund—two obstacles to personl elegance—did not hinder his playing the part of a Bordelais Brummel. A fair skin, with a healthy color, fine hands, neat feet, blue eyes with good eyelashes, black hair, an easy grace, and a chest-voice always pleasantly modulated and full of feeling,—all combined to justify his nickname. Paul was in all things the delicate flower which needs careful culture, its best qualities unfolding only in a moist and propitious soil, which cannot thrive under rough treatment, while a fierce sun burns it and a frost kills it. He was one of those men who are made to accept rather than give happiness, to whom woman is a great factor in life, who need understanding and encouraging, and to whom a wife's love should play the part of Providence.

Though such a character as this gives rise to trouble in domestic life, it is charming and attractive in society. Paul was a success in the narrow provincial circle, where his character, in no respect strongly marked, was better appreciated than in Paris.

The decoration of his town-house, and the necessary restoration of the château of Lanstrac, which he fitted up with English comfort and luxury, absorbed the capital his agent had saved during the past six years. Reduced, therefore, to his exact income of forty odd thousand francs in stocks, he thought it wise to arrange his housekeeping so as to spend no more than this. By the time he had duly displayed his carriages and horses, and entertained the young men of position in the town, he perceived that provincial life necessitated marriage. Still too young to devote himself to the avaricious cares or speculative improvements in which provincial folk ultimately find employment, as required by the need for providing for their children, he ere long felt the want of

the various amusements which become the vital habit of a Parisian.

At the same time, it was not a name to be perpetuated, an heir to whom to transmit his possessions, the position to be gained by having a house where the principal families of the neighborhood might meet, nor weariness of illicit connections, that proved to be the determining cause. He had on arriving fallen in love with the queen of Bordeaux society, the much-talked-of Mademoiselle Evangelista.

Early in the century a rich Spaniard named Evangelista had settled at Bordeaux, where good introductions, added to a fine fortune, had won him a footing in the drawing-rooms of the nobility. His wife had done much to preserve him in good odor amid this aristocracy, which would not, perhaps, have been so ready to receive him but that it could thus annoy the society next below it. Madame Evangelista, descended from the illustrious house of Casa-Real, connected with the Spanish monarchs, was a Creole, and, like all women accustomed to be served by slaves, she was a very fine lady, knew nothing of the value of money, and indulged even her most extravagant fancies, finding them always supplied by a husband who was in love with her, and who was so generous as to conceal from her all the machinery of money-making. The Spaniard, delighted to find that she could be happy at Bordeaux, where his business required him to reside, bought a fine house, kept it in good style, entertained splendidly, and showed excellent taste in every respect. So, from 1800 till 1812, no one was talked of in Bordeaux but Monsieur and Madame Evangelista.

The Spaniard died in 1813, leaving a widow of two-and-thirty with an enormous fortune and the prettiest little daughter in the world, at that time eleven years old, promising to become, as indeed she became, a very accomplished person. Clever as Madame Evangelista might be, the Restoration altered her position; the Royalist party sifted itself, and several families left Bordeaux. Still, though her husband's head and hand were lacking to the management of the

business, for which she showed the inaptitude of a woman of fashion and the indifference of the Creole, she made no change in her mode of living.

By the time when Paul de Manerville had made up his mind to return to his native place, Mademoiselle Natalie Evangelista was a remarkably beautiful girl, and apparently the richest match in Bordeaux, where no one knew of the gradual diminution of her mother's wealth; for, to prolong her reign, Madame Evangelista had spent vast sums of money. Splendid entertainments and almost royal display had kept up the public belief in the wealth of the house.

Natalie was nearly nineteen, no offer of marriage had as yet come to her mother's ear. Accustomed to indulge all her girlish fancies, Mademoiselle Evangelista had Indian shawls and jewels, and lived amid such luxury as frightened the speculative, in a land and at a time when the young are as calculating as their parents. The fatal verdict, "Only a prince could afford to marry Mademoiselle Evangelista," was a watchword in every drawing-room and boudoir. Mothers of families, dowagers with granddaughters to marry, and damsels jealous of the fair Natalie, whose unfailing elegance and tyrannous beauty were an annoyance to them, took care to add venom to this opinion by perfidious insinuations. When an eligible youth was heard to exclaim with rapturous admiration on Natalie's arrival at a ball—"Good Heavens, what a beautiful creature!"—"Yes," the mammas would reply, "but very expensive!" If some newcomer spoke of Mademoiselle Evangelista as charming, and opined that a man wanting a wife could not make a better choice—"Who would be bold enough," some one would ask, "to marry a girl to whom her mother allows a thousand francs a month for dress, who keeps horses and a lady's maid, and wears lace? She has Mechlin lace on her dressing-gowns. What she pays for washing would keep a clerk in comfort. She has morning capes that cost six francs apiece to clean!"

Such speeches as these, constantly repeated by way of

eulogium, extinguished the keenest desire a youth might feel to wed Mademoiselle Evangelista. The queen of every ball, surfeited with flattery, sure of smiles and admiration wherever she went, Natalie knew nothing of life. She lived as birds fly, as flowers bloom, finding every one about her ready to fulfil her least wish. She knew nothing of the price of things, nor of how money is acquired or kept. She very likely supposed that every house was furnished with cooks and coachmen, maids and men-servants, just as a field produces fodder and trees yield fruit. To her the beggar, the pauper, the fallen tree, and the barren field were all the same thing. Cherished like a hope by her mother, fatigue never marred her pleasure; she pranced through the world like a courser on the Steppe, a courser without either bridle or shoes.

Six months after Paul's arrival the upper circles of the town had brought about a meeting between "Pease-blossom" and the queen of the ballroom. The two flowers looked at each other with apparent coldness, and thought each other charming. Madame Evangelista, as being interested in this not unforeseen meeting, read Paul's sentiments in his eyes, and said to herself, "He will be my son-in-law"; while Paul said to himself, as he looked at Natalie, "She will be my wife!" The wealth of the Evangelistas, proverbial in Bordeaux, remained in Paul's memory as a tradition of his boyhood, the most indelible of all such impressions. And so pecuniary suitability was a foregone conclusion, without all the discussion and inquiry, which are as horrible to shy as to proud natures.

When some persons tried to express to Paul the praise which it was impossible to refuse to Natalie's manner and beauty and wit, always ending with some of the bitterly mercenary reflections as to the future to which the expensive style of the household naturally gave rise, Pease-blossom replied with the disdain that such provincialism deserves. And this way of treating the matter, which soon became known, silenced these remarks; for it was Paul who set the *ton* in

ideas and speech as much as in manners and appearance. He had imported the French development of the British stamp and its ice-bound barriers, its Byronic irony, discontent with life, contempt for sacred bonds, English plate and English wit, the scorn of old provincial customs and old property; cigars, patent leather, the pony, lemon-colored gloves, and the canter. So that befell Paul which had happened to no one before—no old dowager or young maid tried to discourage him.

Madame Evangelista began by inviting him to several grand dinners. Could Pease-blossom remain absent from the entertainments to which the most fashionable young men of the town were bidden? In spite of Paul's affected coldness, which did not deceive either the mother or the daughter, he found himself taking the first steps on the road to marriage. When Manerville passed in his tilbury, or riding a good horse, other young men would stop to watch him, and he could hear their comments: "There is a lucky fellow; he is rich, he is handsome, and they say he is to marry Mademoiselle Evangelista. There are some people for whom the world seems to have been made!" If he happened to meet Madame Evangelista's carriage, he was proud of the peculiar graciousness with which the mother and daughter bowed to him.

Even if Paul had not been in love with Mademoiselle Natalie, the world would have married them whether or no. The world, which is the cause of no good thing, is implicated in many disasters; then, when it sees the evil hatching out that it has so maternally brooded, it denies it and avenges it. The upper society of Bordeaux, supposing Mademoiselle Evangelista to have a fortune of a million francs, handed her over to Paul without awaiting the consent of the parties concerned—as it often does. Their fortunes, like themselves, were admirably matched. Paul was accustomed to the luxury and elegance in which Natalie lived. He had arranged and decorated his house as no one else could have arranged a home for Natalie. None but a

man accustomed to the expenses of Paris life and the caprices of Paris women could escape the pecuniary difficulties which might result from marrying a girl who was already quite as much a Creole and a fine lady as her mother. Where a Bordelais in love with Mademoiselle Evangelista would be ruined, the Comte de Manerville, said the world, would steer clear of disaster.

So the affair was settled; the magnates of the tiptop royalist circle, when the marriage was mentioned in their presence, made such civil speeches to Paul as flattered his vanity.

"Every one says you are to marry Mademoiselle Evangelista. You will do well to marry her; you will not find so handsome a wife anywhere, not even in Paris; she is elegant, pleasing, and allied through her mother with the Casa-Reals. You will be the most charming couple; you have the same tastes, the same views of life, and will keep the most agreeable house in Bordeaux. Your wife will only have to pack up her clothes and move in. In a case like yours a house ready to live in is as good as a settlement. And you are lucky to meet with a mother-in-law like Madame Evangelista. She is a clever woman, very attractive, and will be an important aid to you in the political career you ought now to aspire to. And she has sacrificed everything for her daughter, whom she worships, and Natalie will no doubt be a good wife, for she is loving to her mother.—And then, everything must have an end."

"That is all very fine," was Paul's reply; for, in love though he was, he wished to be free to choose, "but it must have a happy end."

Paul soon became a frequent visitor to Madame Evangelista, led there by the need to find employment for his idle hours, which he, more than other men, found it difficult to fill. There only in the town did he find the magnificence and luxury to which he had accustomed himself.

Madame Evangelista, at the age of forty, was handsome still, with the beauty of a grand sunset, which in summer

crowns the close of a cloudless day. Her blameless reputation was an endless subject of discussion in the "sets" of Bordeaux society, and the curiosity of women was all the more alert, because the widow's appearance suggested the sort of temperament which makes Spanish and Creole women notorious. She had black eyes and hair, the foot and figure of a Spaniard—the slender serpentine figure for which the Spaniards have a name. Her face, still beautiful, had the fascinating Creole complexion, which can only be described by comparing it with white muslin over warm blood-color, so equably tinted is its fairness. Her form was round, and attractive for the grace which combines the ease of indolence with vivacity, strength with extreme freedom. She was attractive, but imposing; she fascinated, but made no promises. Being tall, she could at will assume the port and dignity of a queen.

Men were ensnared by her conversation, as birds are by bird-lime, for she had by nature the spirit which necessity bestows on intriguers; she would go on from concession to concession, arming herself with what she gained to ask for something more, but always able to withdraw a thousand yards at a bound if she were asked for anything in return. She was ignorant of facts, but she had known the Courts of Spain and of Naples, the most famous persons of the two Americas, and various illustrious families of England and of the Continent, which gave her an amount of information superficially so wide that it seemed immense. She entertained with the taste and dignity that cannot be learned, though to certain refined minds they become a second nature, assimilating the best of everything wherever they find it. Though her reputation for virtue remained unexplained, it served the purpose of giving weight to her actions, speech, and character.

The mother and daughter were truly friends, apart from filial and maternal feeling. They suited each other, and their perpetual contact had never resulted in a jar. Thus many persons accounted for Madame Evangelista's self-

sacrifice by her love for her daughter. However, though Natalie may have consoled her mother for her unalleviated widowhood, she was not perhaps its only motive. Madame Evangelista was said to have fallen in love with a man whom the second Restoration had reinstated in his title and peerage. This man, who would willingly have married her in 1814, had very decently thrown her over in 1816.

Now Madame Evangelista, apparently the best-hearted creature living, had in her nature one terrible quality which can be best expressed in Catherine de' Medici's motto, *Odiate e aspettate*—Hate and wait. Used always to be first, always to be obeyed, she resembled royal personages in being amiable, gentle, perfectly sweet and easy-going in daily life; but terrible, implacable, when offended in her pride as a woman, a Spaniard, and a Casa-Real. She never forgave. This woman believed in the power of her own hatred; she regarded it as an evil spell which hung over her enemies. This fateful influence she had cast over the man who had been false to her. Events which seemed to prove the efficacy of her *jettatura* confirmed her in her superstitious belief in it. Though he was a minister and a member of the Upper Chamber, ruin stole upon him, and he was utterly undone. His estate, his political and personal position—all was lost. One day Madame Evangelista was able to drive past him in her handsome carriage while he stood in the Champs-Elysées, and to blight him with a look sparkling with the fires of triumph.

This misadventure, occupying her mind for two years, had hindered her marrying again; and afterwards her pride constantly suggested comparisons between those who offered themselves and the husband who had loved her so truly and generously. And thus, from disappointment to hesitancy, from hope to disenchantment, she had come to an age when women have no part to fill in life but that of a mother, devoting themselves to their daughters, and transferring all their interests from themselves to the members of another household, the last investment of human affection.

Madame Evangelista quickly read Paul's character and concealed her own. He was the very man she hoped for as a son-in-law, as the responsible editor of her influence and authority. He was related through his mother to the Maulincours; and the old Baronne de Maulincour, the friend of the Vidame de Pamiers, lived in the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. The grandson of the Baronne, Auguste de Maulincour, had a brilliant position in society. Thus Paul would advantageously introduce the Evangelistas to the World of Paris. The widow had at rare intervals visited Paris under the Empire; she longed to shine in Paris under the Restoration. There only were the elements to be found of political success, the only form of fortune-making in which a woman of fashion can allow herself to co-operate.

Madame Evangelista, obliged by her husband's business to live in Bordeaux, had never liked it; she had a house there, and every one knows how many obligations fetter a woman's life under such circumstances; but she was tired of Bordeaux, she had exhausted its resources. She wished for a wider stage, as gamblers go where the play is highest. So, for her own benefit, she dreamed of high destinies for Paul. She intended to use her own cleverness and knowledge of life for her son-in-law's advancement, so as to enjoy the pleasures of power in his name. Many men are thus the screen of covert feminine ambitions. And, indeed, Madame Evangelista had more than one motive for wishing to govern her daughter's husband.

Paul was, of course, captivated by the lady, all the more certainly because she seemed not to wish to influence him in any way. She used her ascendency to magnify herself, to magnify her daughter, and to give enhanced value to everything about her, so as to have the upper hand from the first with the man in whom she saw the means of continuing her aristocratic connection.

And Paul valued himself the more highly for this appreciation of the mother and daughter. He fancied himself

wittier than he was, when he found that his remarks and his slightest jests were responded to by Mademoiselle Evangelista, who smiled or looked up intelligently, and by her mother, whose flattery always seemed to be involuntary. The two women were so frankly kind, he felt so sure of pleasing them, they drove him so cleverly by the guiding thread of his conceit, that, before long, he spent most of his time at their house.

Within a year of his arrival Count Paul, without having declared his intentions, was so attentive to Natalie, that he was universally understood to be courting her. Neither mother nor daughter seemed to think of marriage. Mademoiselle Evangelista did not depart from the reserve of a fine lady who knows how to be charming and converse agreeably without allowing the slightest advance towards intimacy. This self-respect, rare among provincial folks, attracted Paul greatly. Shy men are often touchy, unexpected suggestions alarm them. They flee even from happiness if it comes with much display, and are ready to accept unhappiness if it comes in a modest form, surrounded by gentle shades. Hence Paul, seeing that Madame Evangelista made no effort to entrap him, ensnared himself. The Spanish lady captivated him finally one evening by saying that at a certain age a superior woman, like a man, found that ambition took the place of the feelings of earlier years.

"That woman," thought Paul, as he went away, "would be capable of getting me some good embassy before I could even be elected deputy."

The man who, under any circumstances, fails to look at everything or at every idea from all sides, to examine them under all aspects, is inefficient and weak, and consequently in danger. Paul at this moment was an optimist; he saw advantages in every contingency, and never remembered that an ambitious mother-in-law may become a tyrant. So every evening as he went home he pictured himself as married, he bewitched himself, and unconsciously shod himself with the slippers of matrimony. He had enjoyed his liberty too

long to regret it; he was tired of single life, which could show him nothing new, and of which he now saw only the discomforts; whereas, though the difficulties of marriage sometimes occurred to him, he far more often contemplated its pleasures; the prospect was new to him.

"Married life," said he to himself, "is hard only on the poorer classes. Half its troubles vanish before wealth."

So every day some hopeful suggestion added to the list of advantages which he saw in this union.

"However high I may rise in life, Natalie will always be equal to her position," he would say to himself, "and that is no small merit in a wife. How many men of the Empire have I seen suffering torment from their wives! Is it not an important element of happiness never to feel one's pride or vanity rubbed the wrong way by the companion one has chosen? A man can never be utterly wretched with a well-bred woman; she never makes him contemptible, and she may be of use. Natalie will be a perfect mistress of a drawing-room."

Then he fell back on his recollections of the most distinguished women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, to convince himself that Natalie could at least meet them on a footing of perfect equality, if not eclipse them. Every comparison was to Natalie's advantage. The terms of the comparisons indeed, derived from his imagination, yielded to his wishes. In Paris some new figure would each day have crossed his path, girls of different styles of beauty, and the variety of such impressions would have given balance to his mind; but at Bordeaux Natalie had no rival, she was the single flower, and had blossomed very cleverly at the juncture when Paul was under the tyranny of an idea to which most men fall victims. These conditions of propinquity, added to the reasoning of his vanity and a genuine affection, which could find no issue but in marriage, led Paul on to an increasing passion, of which he was wise enough to keep the secret to himself, construing it as a wish simply to get married.

He even endeavored to study Mademoiselle Evangelista in a way that would not compromise his ultimate decision in his own eyes, for his friend de Marsay's terrible speech rang in his ears now and again. But, in the first place, those who are accustomed to luxury have a tone of simplicity that is very deceptive. They scorn it, they use it habitually, it is the means and not the object of their lives. Paul, as he saw that these ladies' lives were so similar to his own, never for an instant imagined that they concealed any conceivable source of ruin. And then, though there are a few general rules for mitigating the worries of married life, there are none to enable us to guess or foresee them.

When troubles arise between two beings who have undertaken to make life happy and easy each for the other, they are based on the friction produced by an incessant intimacy which does not arise between two persons before marriage, and never can arise till the laws and habits of French life are changed. Two beings on the eve of joining their lives always deceive each other; but the deception is innocent and involuntary. Each, of course, stands in the best light; they are rivals as to which makes the most promising show, and at that time form a favorable idea of themselves which they cannot afterwards come up to. Real life, like a changeable day, consists more often of the gray, dull hours when Nature is overcast than of the brilliant intervals when the sun gives glory and joy to the fields. Young people look only at the fine days. Subsequently they ascribe the inevitable troubles of life to matrimony, for there is in man a tendency to seek the cause of his griefs in things or persons immediately at hand.

To discover in Mademoiselle Evangelista's demeanor or countenance, in her words or her gestures, any indication that might reveal the quota of imperfection inherent in her character, Paul would have needed not merely the science of Lavater and of Gall, but another kind of knowledge for which no code of formulas exists, the personal intuition of the observer, which requires almost universal knowledge.

Like all girls, Natalie's countenance was impenetrable. The deep, serene peace given by sculptors to the virgin heads intended to personify Justice, Innocence, all the divinities who dwell above earthly agitations—this perfect calm is the greatest charm of a girlish face, it is the sign-manual of her purity; nothing has stirred her, no repressed passion, no betrayed affection has cast a shade on the placidity of her features; and if it is assumed, the girl has ceased to exist. Living always inseparable from her mother, Natalie, like every Spanish woman, had had none but religious teaching, and some few lessons of a mother to her daughter which might be useful for her part in life. Hence her calm expression was natural; but it was a veil, in which the woman was shrouded as a butterfly is in the chrysalis.

At the same time, a man skilled in the use of the scalpel of analysis might have discerned in Natalie some revelation of the difficulties her character might present in the conflict of married or social life. Her really wonderful beauty was marked by excessive regularity of features, in perfect harmony with the proportions of her head and figure. Such perfection does not promise well for the intellect, and there are few exceptions to this rule. Superior qualities show in some slight imperfections of form which become exquisitely attractive, points of light where antagonistic feelings sparkle and rivet the eye. Perfect harmony indicates the coldness of a compound nature.

Natalie had a round figure, a sign of strength, but also an infallible evidence of self-will often reaching the pitch of obstinacy in women whose mind is neither keen nor broad. Her hands, like those of a Greek statue, confirmed the forecast of her face and form by showing a love of unreasoning dominion—Will for will's sake. Her brows met in the middle, which, according to observers, indicates a disposition to jealousy. The jealousy of noble souls becomes emulation and leads to great things; that of mean minds turns to hatred. Her mother's motto, *Odiate e aspettate,* was hers in all its strength. Her eyes looked black, but were in fact dark hazel-

brown, and contrasted with her hair of that russet hue, so highly prized by the Romans, and known in English as auburn, the usual color of the hair in the children of two black-haired parents like Monsieur and Madame Evangelista. Her delicately white skin added infinitely to the charm of this contrast of colors in her hair and eyes, but this refinement was purely superficial; for whenever the lines of a face have not a peculiar soft roundness, whatever the refinement and delicacy of the details, do not look for any especial charms of mind. These flowers of delusive youth presently fade, and you are surprised after the lapse of a few years to detect hardness, sternness, where you once admired the elegance of lofty qualities.

There was something august in Natalie's features; still, her chin was rather heavy—a painter would have said thick in *impasto,* an expression descriptive of a type that shows pre-existing sentiments of which the violence does not declare itself till middle life. Her mouth, a little sunk in her face, showed the arrogance no less expressed in her hand, her chin, her eyebrows, and her stately shape. Finally, a last sign which alone might have warned the judgment of a connoisseur, Natalie's pure and fascinating voice had a metallic ring. However gently the brazen instrument was handled, however tenderly the vibrations were sent through the curves of the horn, that voice proclaimed a nature like that of the Duke of Alva, from whom the Casa-Reals were collaterally descended. All these indications pointed to passions, violent but not tender, to sudden infatuations, irreconcilable hatred, a certain wit without intellect, and the craving to rule, inherent in persons who feel themselves below their pretensions.

These faults, the outcome of race and constitution, sometimes compensated for by the impulsions of generous blood, were hidden in Natalie as ore is hidden in the mine, and would only be brought to the surface by the rough treatment and shocks to which character is subjected in the world. At present the sweetness and freshness of youth, the

elegance of her manners, her saintly ignorance, and the grace of girlhood, tinged her features with the delicate veneer that always must deceive superficial observers. Then her mother had given her the habit of agreeable talk which lends a tone of superiority, replies to argument by banter, and has a fascinating flow under which a woman hides the tufa of a shallow mind, as nature hides a barren soil under a luxuriant growth of ephemeral plants. And Natalie had the charm of spoilt children who have known no griefs; her frankness was seductive, she had not the prim manners which mothers impress on their daughters by laying down a code of absurd reserve and speech when they wish to get them married. She was sincere and gay, as a girl is, who, knowing nothing of marriage, expects happiness only, foresees no disaster, and believes that as a wife she will acquire the right of always having her own way.

How should Paul, who loved as a man does when love is seconded by desire, foresee in a girl of this temper, whose beauty dazzled him, the woman as she would be at thirty, when shrewder observers might have been deceived by appearances? If happiness were difficult to find in married life, with this girl it would not be impossible. Some fine qualities shone through her defects. In the hand of a skilful master any good quality may be made to stifle faults, especially in a girl who can love.

But to make so stern a metal ductile, the iron fist of which de Marsay had spoken was needed. The Paris dandy was right. Fear, inspired by love, is an infallible tool for dealing with a woman's spirit. Those who fear, love; and fear is more nearly akin to love than to hatred.—Would Paul have the coolness, the judgment, the firmness needed in the contest of which no wife should be allowed to have a suspicion? And again, did Natalie love Paul?

Natalie, like most girls, mistook for love the first impulses of instinct and liking that Paul's appearance stirred in her, knowing nothing of the meaning of marriage or of housewifery. To her the Comte de Manerville, who had seen

diplomatic service at every court in Europe, one of the most fashionable men of Paris, could not be an ordinary man devoid of moral strength, with a mixture of bravery and shyness, energetic perhaps in adversity, but defenceless against the foes that poison happiness. Would she develop tact enough to discern Paul's good qualities among his superficial defects? Would she not magnify these and forget those, after the manner of young wives who know nothing of life?

At a certain age a woman will overlook vice in the man who spares her petty annoyances, while she regards such annoyances as misfortunes. What conciliatory influence and what experience would cement and enlighten this young couple? Would not Paul and his wife imagine that love was all in all, when they were only at the stage of affectionate grimacing in which young wives indulge at the beginning of their life, and of the compliments a husband pays on their return from a ball while he still has the courtesy of admiration?

In such a situation would not Paul succumb to his wife's tyranny instead of asserting his authority? Would he be able to say "No"? All was danger for a weak man in circumstances where a strong one might perhaps have run some risk.

The subject of this study is not the transition of an unmarried to a married man—a picture which, broadly treated, would not lack the interest which the inmost storm of our feelings must lend to the commonest facts of life. The events and ideas which culminated in Paul's marriage to Mademoiselle Evangelista are an introduction to the work, and only intended as a study to the great comedy which is the prologue to every married life. Hitherto this passage has been neglected by dramatic writers, though it offers fresh resources to their wit.

This prologue, which decided Paul's future life, and to which Madame Evangelista looked forward with terror, was

the discussion to which the marriage settlements give rise in every family, whether of the nobility or of the middle class; for human passions are quite as strongly agitated by small interests as by great ones. These dramas, played out in the presence of the notary, are all more or less like this one, and its real interest will be less in these pages than in the memory of most married people.

Early in the winter of 1822 Paul de Manerville, through the intervention of his grand-aunt, Madame la Baronne de Maulincour, asked the hand of Mademoiselle Evangelista. Though the Baroness usually spent no more than two months in Médoc, she remained on this occasion till the end of October to be of use to her grand-nephew in this matter, and play the part of a mother. After laying the overtures before Madame Evangelista, the experienced old lady came to report to Paul on the results of this step.

"My boy," said she, "I have settled the matter. In discussing money matters I discovered that Madame Evangelista gives her daughter nothing. Mademoiselle Natalie marries with but her barest right.—Marry, my dear; men who have a name and estates to transmit must sooner or later end by marriage. I should like to see my dear Auguste do the same.

"You can get married without me, I have nothing to bestow on you but my blessing, and old women of my age have no business at weddings. I shall return to Paris to-morrow. When you introduce your wife to society, I shall see her much more comfortably than I can here.—If you had not your house in Paris, you would have found a home with me. I should have been delighted to arrange my second-floor rooms to suit you."

"Dear aunt," said Paul, "thank you very warmly. . . . But what do you mean by saying her mother gives her nothing, and that she marries only with her bare rights?"

"Her mother, my dear boy, is a very knowing hand, who is taking advantage of the girl's beauty to make terms and give you no more than what she cannot keep back—the

father's fortune. We old folks, you know, think a great deal of 'How much has he? How much has she?' I advise you to give strict instructions to your notary. The marriage contract, my child, is a sacred duty. If your father and mother had not made their bed well, you might now be without sheets.—You will have children—they are the usual result of marriage—so you are bound to think of this. Call in Maître Mathias, our old notary."

Madame de Maulincour left Paul plunged in perplexity. —His mother-in-law was a knowing hand! He must discuss and defend his interests in the marriage contract!—Who, then, proposed to attack them? So he took his aunt's advice and entrusted the matter of settlements to Maître Mathias.

Still, he could not help thinking of the anticipated discussion. And it was not without much trepidation that he went to see Madame Evangelista with a view to announcing his intentions. Like all timid people, he was afraid lest he should betray the distrust suggested by his aunt, which he thought nothing less than insulting. To avoid the slightest friction with so imposing a personage as his future stepmother seemed to him, he fell back on the circumlocutions natural to those who dare not face a difficulty.

"Madame, you know what an old family notary is like," said he, when Natalie was absent for a minute. "Mine is a worthy old man, who would be deeply aggrieved if I did not place my marriage contract in his hands——"

"But, my dear fellow," said Madame Evangelista, interrupting him, "are not marriage contracts always settled through the notaries on each side?"

During the interval while Paul sat pondering, not daring to open the matter, Madame Evangelista had been wondering, "What is he thinking about?" for women have a great power of reading thought from the play of feature. And she could guess at the great-aunt's hints from the embarrassed gaze and agitated tone which betrayed Paul's mental disturbance.

"At last," thought she, "the decisive moment has come; the crisis is at hand; what will be the end of it?—My notary," she went on, after a pause, "is Maître Solonet, and yours is Maître Mathias; I will ask them both to dinner to-morrow, and they can settle the matter between them. Is it not their business to conciliate our interests without our meddling, as it is that of the cook to feed us well?"

"Why, of course," said he, with a little sigh of relief.

By a strange inversion of parts, Paul, who was blameless, quaked, while Madame Evangelista, though dreadfully anxious, appeared calm. The widow owed her daughter the third of the fortune left by Monsieur Evangelista, twelve hundred thousand francs, and was quite unable to pay it, even if she stripped herself of all her possessions. She would be at her son-in-law's mercy. Though she might override Paul alone, would Paul, enlightened by his lawyer, agree to any compromise as to the account of her stewardship? If he withdrew, all Bordeaux would know the reason, and it would be impossible for Natalie to marry. The mother who wished to secure her daughter's happiness, the woman who from the hour of her birth had lived in honor, foresaw the day when she must be dishonest.

Like those great generals who would fain wipe out of their lives the moment when they were cowards at heart, she wished she could score out that day from the days of her life. And certainly some of her hairs turned white in the course of the night when, face to face with this difficulty, she bitterly blamed herself for her want of care.

In the first place, she was obliged to confide in her lawyer, whom she sent for to attend her as soon as she was up. She had to confess a secret vexation which she had never admitted even to herself, for she had walked on to the verge of the precipice, trusting to one of those chances that never happen. And a feeling was born in her soul, a little animus against Paul that was not yet hatred, nor aversion, nor in any way evil—but, was not he the antagonistic party in this family suit? Was he not, unwittingly; an innocent enemy

who must be defeated? And who could ever love any one he had duped?

Compelled to deceive, the Spanish woman resolved, like any woman, to show her superiority in a contest of which the entire success could alone wipe out the discredit. In the silence of the night she excused herself by a line of argument, in which her pride had the upper hand. Had not Natalie benefited by her lavishness? Had her conduct ever been actuated by one of the base and ignoble motives that degrade the soul? She could not keep accounts—well, was that a sin, a crime? Was not a man only too lucky to win such a wife as Natalie? Was not the treasure she had preserved for him worth a discharge in full? Did not many a man pay for the woman he loved by making great sacrifices? And why should he do more for a courtesan than for a wife?—Besides, Paul was a commonplace, incapable being; she would support him by the resources of her own cleverness; she would help him to make his way in the world; he would owe his position to her; would not this amply pay the debt? He would be a fool to hesitate! And for a few thousand francs more or less? It would be disgraceful!

"If I am not at once successful," said she to herself, "I leave Bordeaux. I can still secure a good match for Natalie by realizing all that is left—the house, my diamonds, and the furniture, giving her all but an annuity for myself."

When a strongly tempered spirit plans a retreat, as Richelieu did at Brouage, and schemes for a splendid finale, this alternative becomes a fulcrum which helps the schemer to triumph. This escape, in case of failure, reassured Madame Evangelista, who went to sleep indeed, full of confidence in her second in this duel. She trusted greatly to the aid of the cleverest notary in Bordeaux, Maître Solonet, a young man of seven-and-twenty, a member of the Legion of Honor as the reward of having contributed actively to the restoration of the Bourbons. Proud and delighted to be admitted to an acquaintance with Madame Evangelista, less as a lawyer than as belonging to the Royalist party in Bordeaux,

Solonet cherished for her sunset beauty one of those passions which such women as Madame Evangelista ignore while they are flattered by them, and which even the prudish allow to float in their wake. Solonet lived in an attitude of vanity full of respect and seemly attentions. This young man arrived next morning with the zeal of a slave, and was admitted to the widow's bedroom, where he found her coquettishly dressed in a becoming wrapper.

"Now," said she, "can I trust to your reticence and entire devotion in the discussion which is to take place this evening? Of course, you can guess that my daughter's marriage contract is in question."

The young lawyer was profuse in protestations.

"For the facts, then," said she.

"I am all attention," he replied, with a look of concentration.

Madame Evangelista stated the case without any finessing.

"My dear madame, all this matters not," said Maître Solonet, assuming an important air when his client had laid the exact figures before him. "How have you dealt with Monsieur de Manerville? The moral attitude is of greater consequence than any questions of law or finance."

Madame Evangelista robed herself in dignity; the young notary was delighted to learn that to this day his client, in her treatment of Paul, had preserved the strictest distance; half out of real pride, and half out of unconscious self-interest, she had always behaved to the Comte de Manerville as though he were her inferior, and it would be an honor for him to marry Mademoiselle Evangelista. Neither she nor her daughter could be suspected of interested motives; their feelings were evidently free from meanness; if Paul should raise the least difficulty on the money question, they had every right to withdraw to an immeasurable distance—in fact, she had a complete ascendency over her would-be son-in-law.

"This being the case," said Solonet, "what is the utmost concession you are inclined to make?"

"The least possible," said she, laughing.

"A woman's answer!" replied Solonet. "Madame, do you really wish to see Mademoiselle Natalie married?"

"Yes."

"And you want a discharge for the eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs you will owe her in accordance with the account rendered of your guardianship?"

"Exactly!"

"How much do you wish to reserve?"

"At least thirty thousand francs a year."

"So we must conquer or perish?"

"Yes."

"Well, I will consider the ways and means of achieving that end, for we must be very dexterous, and husband our resources. I will give you a few hints on arriving; act on them exactly, and I can confidently predict complete success.—Is Count Paul in love with Mademoiselle Natalie?" he asked as he rose.

"He worships her."

"That is not enough. Is he so anxious to have her as his wife that he will pass over any little pecuniary difficulties?"

"Yes."

"That is what I call having personal property in a daughter!" exclaimed the notary. "Make her look her best this evening," he added, with a cunning twinkle.

"We have a perfect dress for her."

"The dress for the Contract, in my opinion, is half the settlements," said Solonet.

This last argument struck Madame Evangelista as so cogent that she insisted on helping her daughter to dress, partly to superintend the toilet, but also to secure her as an innocent accomplice in her financial plot. And her daughter, with her coiffure à la Sévigné, and a white cashmere dress with rose-colored bows, seemed to her handsome enough to assure the victory.

When the maid had left them, and Madame Evangelista

was sure that nobody was within hearing, she arranged her daughter's curls as a preliminary.

"My dear child, are you sincerely attached to Monsieur de Manerville?" said she in a steady voice.

The mother and daughter exchanged a strangely meaning glance.

"Why, my little mother, should you ask to-day rather than yesterday? Why have you allowed me to imagine a doubt?"

"If it were to part you from me for ever, would you marry him all the same?"

"I could give him up without dying of grief."

"Then you do not love him, my dear," said the mother, kissing her daughter's forehead.

"But why, my dear mamma, are you playing the grand inquisitor?"

"I wanted to see if you cared to be married without being madly in love with your husband."

"I like him."

"You are right; he is a Count, and, between us, he shall be made peer of France. But there will be difficulties."

"Difficulties between people who care for each other?—No! Pease-blossom, my dear mother, is too well planted there," and she pointed to her heart with a pretty gesture, "to make the smallest objection; I am sure of that."

"But if it were not so?"

"I should utterly forget him."

"Well said! You are a Casa-Real.—But though he is madly in love with you, if certain matters were discussed which do not immediately concern him, but which he would have to make the best of for your sake and mine, Natalie, heh? If, without proceeding in the least too far, a little graciousness of manner might turn the scale?—A mere nothing, you know, a word? Men are like that—they can resist sound argument and yield to a glance."

"I understand! A little touch just to make Favorite leap

the gate," said Natalie, with a flourish as if she were whipping a horse.

"My darling, I do not wish you to do anything approaching to invitation. We have traditions of old Castilian pride which will never allow us to go too far. The Count will be informed of my situation."

"What situation?"

"You would not understand if I told you.—Well, if after seeing you in all your beauty his eyes should betray the slightest hesitancy—and I shall watch him—at that instant I should break the whole thing off; I should turn everything into money, leave Bordeaux, and go to Douai, to the Claës, who, after all, are related to us through the Temnincks. Then I would find a French peer for your husband, even if I had to take refuge in a convent and give you my whole fortune."

"My dear mother, what can I do to hinder such misfortunes?" said Natalie.

"I never saw you lovelier, my child! Be a little purposely attractive, and all will be well."

Madame Evangelista left Natalie pensive, and went to achieve a toilet which allowed her to stand a comparison with her daughter. If Natalie was to fascinate Paul, must not she herself fire the enthusiasm of her champion Solonet?

The mother and daughter were armed for conquest when Paul arrived with the bouquet which for some months past had been his daily offering to Natalie. Then they sat chatting while awaiting the lawyers.

This day was to Paul the first skirmish in the long and weary warfare of married life. It is necessary, therefore, to review the forces on either side, to place the belligerents, and to define the field on which they are to do battle.

To second him in a struggle of which he did not in the least appreciate the consequences, Paul had nobody but his old lawyer Mathias. They were each to be surprised unarmed by an unexpected manœuvre, driven by an enemy whose plans were laid, and compelled to act without having time for

reflection. What man but would have failed even with Cujas and Barthole to back him? How should he fear perfidy when everything seemed so simple and natural?

What could Mathias do single-handed against Madame Evangelista, Solonet, and Natalie, especially when his client was a lover who would go over to the enemy as soon as his happiness should seem to be imperiled? Paul was already entangling himself by making the pretty speeches customary with lovers, to which his passion gave an emphasis of immense value in the eyes of Madame Evangelista, who was leading him on to commit himself.

The matrimonial *condottieri*, who were about to do battle for their clients, and whose personal prowess would prove decisive in this solemn contest—the two notaries—represented the old and the new schools, the old and the new style of notary.

Maître Mathias was a worthy old man of sixty-nine, proud of twenty years' practice in his office. His broad, gouty feet were shod in shoes with silver buckles, and were an absurd finish to legs so thin, with such prominent knee-bones, that when he crossed his feet they looked like the cross-bones on a tombstone. His lean thighs, lost in baggy black knee-breeches with silver buckles, seemed to bend under the weight of a burly stomach and the round shoulders characteristic of men who live in an office! a huge ball, always clothed in a green coat with square-cut skirts, which no one remembered ever to have seen new. His hair, tightly combed back and powdered, was tied in a rat's tail that always tucked itself away between the collar of his coat and that of his flowered white waistcoat. With his bullet head, his face as red as a vine-leaf, his blue eyes, trumpet-nose, thick lips, and double chin, the dear little man, wherever he went, aroused the laughter so liberally bestowed by the French on the grotesque creations which Nature sometimes allows herself and Art thinks it funny to exaggerate, calling them caricatures.

But in Maître Mathias the mind had triumphed over the body, the qualities of the soul had vanquished the eccentricity

of his appearance. Most of the townsfolk treated him with friendly respect and deference full of esteem. The notary's voice won all hearts by the eloquent ring of honesty. His only cunning consisted in going straight to the point, oversetting every evil thought by the directness of his questions. His sharply observant eye, and his long experience of business, gave him that spirit of divination which allowed him to read consciences and discern the most secret thoughts. Though grave and quiet in business, this patriarch had the cheerfulness of our ancestors. He might, one felt, risk a song at table, accept and keep up family customs, celebrate anniversaries and birthdays, whether of grandparents or children, and bury the Christmas log with due ceremony; he loved to give New Year's gifts, to invent surprises, and bring out Easter eggs; he believed, no doubt, in the duties of a godfather, and would never neglect any old-time custom that gave color to life of yore.

Maître Mathias was a noble and respectable survival of the notaries, obscure men of honor, of whom no receipt was asked for millions, and who returned them in the same bags, tied with the same string; who fulfilled every trust to the letter, drew up inventories for probate with decent feeling, took a paternal interest in their client's affairs, put a bar sometimes in the way of a spendthrift, and were the depositaries of family secrets; in short, one of those notaries who considered themselves responsible for blunders in their deeds, and who gave time and thought to them. Never, in the whole of his career as a notary, had one of his clients to complain of a bad investment, of a mortgage ill chosen or carelessly managed. His wealth, slowly but honestly acquired, had been accumulated through thirty years of industry and economy. He had found places for fourteen clerks. Religious and generous in secret, Mathias was always to be found where good was to be done without reward. He was an acting member of the Board of Asylums and the Charitable Committee, and the largest subscriber to the voluntary rates for the relief of unexpected disaster, or the

establishment of some useful institution. Thus, neither he nor his wife had a carriage; his word was sacred; he had as much money deposited in his cellar as lay at the bank; he was known as "Good Monsieur Mathias"; and when he died, three thousand persons followed him to the grave.

Solonet was the youthful notary who comes in humming a tune, who affects an airy manner, and declares that business may be done quite as efficiently with a laugh as with a serious countenance; the notary who is a captain in the National Guard, who does not like to be known for a lawyer, and aims at the Cross of the Legion of Honor, who keeps his carriage and leaves the correcting of his deeds to his clerks; the notary who goes to balls and to the play, who buys pictures and plays *écarté,* who has a cash drawer into which he pours deposit-money, repaying in notes what he receives in gold; the notary who keeps pace with the times and risks his capital in doubtful investments, who speculates, hoping to retire with an income of thirty thousand francs after ten years in his office; the notary whose acumen is the outcome of duplicity, and who is feared by many as an accomplice in possession of their secrets; the notary who regards his official position as a means of marrying some blue-stocking heiress.

When the fair and elegant Solonet—all curled and scented, booted like a lover of the Vaudeville, and dressed like a dandy whose most important business is a duel—entered the room before his older colleague, who walked slowly from a touch of the gout, the two were the living representatives of one of the caricatures entitled "Then and Now," which had great success under the Empire.

Though Madame and Mademoiselle Evangelista, to whom "Good Monsieur Mathias" was a stranger, at first felt a slight inclination to laugh, they were at once touched by the perfect grace of his greeting. The worthy man's speech was full of the amenity that an amiable old man can infuse both into what he says and the manner of saying it.

The younger man, with his frothy sparkle, was at once thrown into the shade. Mathias showed his superior breeding by the measured respect of his address to Paul. With-

out humiliating his white hairs, he recognized the young man's rank, while appreciating the fact that certain honors are due to old age, and that all such social rights are interdependent. Solonet's bow and "How d' do?" were, on the contrary, the utterance of perfect equality, which could not fail to offend the susceptibilities of a man of the world, and to make himself ridiculous in the eyes of a man of rank.

The young notary, by a somewhat familiar gesture, invited Madame Evangelista to speak with him in a window-recess. For some few moments they spoke in whispers, laughing now and then, no doubt to mislead the others as to the importance of the conversation, in which Maître Solonet communicated the plan of battle to the lady in command.

"And could you really," said he, in conclusion, "make up your mind to sell your house?"

"Undoubtedly!" said she.

Madame Evangelista did not choose to tell her lawyer her reasons for such heroism, as he thought it, for Solonet's zeal might have cooled if he had known that his client meant to leave Bordeaux. She had not even said so to Paul, not wishing to alarm him prematurely by the extent of the circumvallations needed for the first outworks of a political position.

After dinner the plenipotentiaries left the lovers with Madame Evangelista, and went into an adjoining room to discuss business. Thus two dramas were being enacted: by the chimney corner in the drawing-room a love scene in which life smiled bright and happy; in the study a serious duologue, in which interest was laid bare, and already played the part it always fills under the most flowery aspects of life.

"My dear sir, the deed will be in your hands; I know what I owe to my senior." Mathias bowed gravely. "But," Solonet went on, unfolding a rough draft, of no use whatever, that a clerk had written out, "as we are the weaker party, as we are the spinster, I have drafted the articles to

save you the trouble. We propose to marry with all our rights on a footing of possession in common, an unqualified settlement of all estate, real and personal, each on the other in case of decease without issue; or, if issue survive them, a settlement of one-quarter on the surviving parent, and a life-interest in one quarter more. The sum thrown into common stock to be one-quarter of the estate of each contracting party, the survivor to have all furniture and movables without exception and duty free. It is all as plain as day."

"Ta, ta, ta, ta," said Mathias, "I do not do business as you would sing a ballad. What have you to show?"

"What on your side?" asked Solonet.

"We have to settle," said Mathias, "the estate of Lanstrac, producing twenty-three thousand francs a year in rents, to say nothing of produce in kind: *Item* the farms of le Grassol and le Guadet, each let for three thousand six hundred francs. *Item* the vineyards of Bellerose, yielding on an average sixteen thousand—together forty-six thousand two hundred francs a year. *Item* a family mansion at Bordeaux, rated at nine hundred. *Item* a fine house in Paris, with a forecourt and garden, Rue de la Pépinière, rated at fifteen hundred. These properties, of which I hold the title-deeds, we inherit from our parents, excepting the house in Paris acquired by purchase. We have also to include the furniture of the two houses and of the château of Lanstrac, valued at four hundred and fifty thousand francs. There you have the table, the cloth, and the first course. Now what have you for the second course and the dessert?"

"Our rights and expectations," said Solonet.

"Specify, my dear sir," replied Mathias. "What have you to show? Where is the valuation made at Monsieur Evangelista's death? Show me your valuations, and the investments you hold. Where is your capital—if you have any? Where is your land—if you have land! Show me your guardian's accounts, and tell us what your mother gives or promises to give you."

"Is Monsieur le Comte de Manerville in love with Mademoiselle Evangelista?"

"He means to marry her if everything proves suitable," said the old notary. "I am not a child; this is a matter of business and not of sentiment."

"The business will fall through if you have no sentiment —and generous sentiment; and this is why," said Solonet. "We had no valuation made after our husband's death. Spanish, and a Creole, we knew nothing of French law. And we were too deeply grieved, to think of the petty formalities which absorb colder hearts. It is a matter of public notoriety that the deceased gentleman adored his wife, and that we were plunged in woe. Though we had a probate and a kind of valuation on a general estimate, you may thank the surrogate guardian for that, who called upon us to make a statement and settle a sum on our daughter as best we might just at a time when we were obliged to sell out of the English funds to an enormous amount which we wished to reinvest in Paris at double the interest."

"Come, do not talk nonsense to me. There are means of checking these amounts. How much did you pay in succession duties? The figure will be enough to verify the amounts. Go to the facts. Tell us plainly how much you had, and what is left. And then, if we are too desperately in love, we shall see."

"Well, if you are marrying for money, you may make your bow at once. We may lay claim to more than a million francs; but our mother has nothing of it left but this house and furniture and four hundred odd thousand francs, invested in 1817 in five per cents, and bringing in forty thousand francs a year."

"How then do you keep up a style costing a hundred thousand?" cried Mathias in dismay.

"Our daughter has cost us vast sums. Besides, we like display. And, finally, all your jeremiads will not bring back two sous of it."

"Mademoiselle Natalie might have been very handsomely

brought up on the fifty thousand francs a year that belonged to her without rushing into ruin. And if you ate with such an appetite as a girl, what will you not devour as a wife?"

"Let us go then," said Solonet. "The handsomest girl alive is bound to spend more than she has."

"I will go and speak two words to my client," said the older lawyer.

"Go, go," thought Maître Solonet, "go, old Father Cassandra, and tell your client we have not a farthing." For in the silence of his private office he had strategically disposed of his masses, formed his arguments in columns, fixed the turning-points of the discussion, and prepared the critical moment when the antagonistic parties, thinking all was lost, would jump at a compromise which would be the triumph of his client.

The flowing dress with pink ribbons, the ringlets *à la Sévigné,* Natalie's small foot, her insinuating looks, her slender hand, constantly engaged in rearranging the curls which did not need it—all the tricks of a girl showing off, as a peacock spreads its tail in the sun—had brought Paul to the point at which her mother wished to see him. He was crazy with admiration, as crazy as a schoolboy for a courtesan; his looks, an unfailing thermometer of the mind, marked the frenzy of passion which leads a man to commit a thousand follies.

"Natalie is so beautiful," he whispered to Madame Evangelista, "that I can understand the madness which drives us to pay for pleasure by death."

The lady tossed her head.

"A lover's words!" she replied. "My husband never made me such fine speeches; but he married me penniless, and never in thirteen years gave me an instant's pain."

"Is that a hint for me?" said Paul, smiling.

"You know how truly I care for you, dear boy," said she, pressing his hand. "Besides, do you not think I must love you well to be willing to give you my Natalie?"

"To give me! To give me!" cried the girl, laughing and

waving a fan of Indian feathers. "What are you whispering about?"

"I," said Paul, "was saying how well I love you—since the proprieties forbid my expressing my hopes to you."

"Why?"

"I am afraid of myself."

"Oh! you are too clever not to know how to set the gems of flattery. Would you like me to tell you what I think of you?—Well, you seem to me to have more wit than a man in love should show. To be Pease-blossom and at the same time very clever," said she, looking down, "seems to me an unfair advantage. A man ought to choose between the two. I, too, am afraid."

"Of what?"

"We will not talk like this.—Do not you think, mother, that there is danger in such a conversation when the contract is not yet signed?"

"But it will be," said Paul.

"I should very much like to know what Achilles and Nestor are saying to each other," said Natalie, with a glance of childlike curiosity at the door of the adjoining room.

"They are discussing our children, our death, and I know not what trifles besides," said Paul. "They are counting out our crown-pieces, to tell us whether we may have five horses in the stable. And they are considering certain deeds of gift, but I have forestalled them there."

"How?" said Natalie.

"Have I not given you myself wholly and all I have?" said he, looking at the girl, who was handsomer than ever as the blush brought up by her pleasure at this reply mounted to her cheeks.

"Mother, how am I to repay such generosity?"

"My dear child, is not your life before you? If you make him happy every day, is not that a gift of inexhaustible treasures? I had no other furniture."

"Do you like Lanstrac?" asked Paul.

"How can I fail to like anything that is yours?" said she. "And I should like to see your house."

"Our house," said Paul. "You want to see whether I have anticipated your tastes, if you can be happy there? Your mother has made your husband's task a hard one; you have always been so happy; but when love is infinite, nothing is impossible."

"Dear children," said Madame Evangelista, "do you think you can remain in Bordeaux during the early days of your marriage? If you feel bold enough to face the world that knows you, watches you, criticises you—well and good! But if you both have that coyness which dwells in the soul and finds no utterance, we will go to Paris, where the life of a young couple is lost in the torrent. There only can you live like lovers without fear of ridicule."

"You are right, mother; I had not thought of it. But I shall hardly have time to get the house ready. I will write this evening to de Marsay, a friend on whom I can rely, to hurry on the workmen."

At the very moment when, like all young men who are accustomed to gratify their wishes without any preliminary reflection, Paul was recklessly pledging himself to the expenses of a residence in Paris, Maître Mathias came into the room and signed to his client to come to speak with him.

"What is it, my good friend?" said Paul, allowing himself to be led aside.

"Monsieur le Comte," said the worthy man, "the lady has not a sou. My advice is to put off this discussion till another day to give you the opportunity of acting with propriety."

"Monsieur Paul," said Natalie, "I also should like a private word with you."

Though Madame Evangelista's face was calm, no Jew in the Dark Ages ever suffered greater martyrdom in his cauldron of boiling oil than she is her violet velvet dress. Solonet had pledged himself to the marriage, but she knew not by what means and conditions he meant to succeed, and

she endured the most dreadful anguish of alternative courses. She really owed her triumph perhaps to her daughter's disobedience.

Natalie had put her own interpretation on her mother's words, for she could not fail to see her uneasiness. When she perceived the effect of her advances, her mind was torn by a thousand contradictory thoughts. Without criticising her mother, she felt half ashamed of this manœuvring, of which the result was obviously to be some definite advantage. Then she was seized by a very intelligible sort of jealous curiosity. She wanted to ascertain whether Paul loved her well enough to overlook the difficulties her mother had alluded to, and of which the existence was proved by Maître Mathias' cloudy brow. These feelings prompted her to an impulse of honesty which, in fact, became her well. The blackest perfidy would have been less dangerous than her innocence was.

"Paul," said she in an undertone, and it was the first time she had addressed him by his name, "if some difficulties of money matters could divide us, understand that I release you from every pledge, and give you leave to ascribe to me all the blame that could arise from such a separation."

She spoke with such perfect dignity in the expression of her generosity, that Paul believed in her disinterestedness and her ignorance of the fact which the notary had just communicated to him; he pressed the girl's hand, kissing it like a man to whom love is far dearer than money.

Natalie left the room.

"Bless me! Monsieur le Comte, you are committing great follies," growled the old notary, rejoining his client.

But Paul stood pensive; he had expected to have an income of about a hundred thousand francs by uniting his fortune and Natalie's; and however blindly in love a man may be, he does not drop without a pang from a hundred thousand to forty-six thousand francs a year when he marries a woman accustomed to every luxury.

"My daughter is gone," said Madame Evangelista, ad-

vancing with royal dignity to where Paul and the notary were standing. "Can you not tell me what is going on!"

"Madame," said Mathias, dismayed by Paul's silence, and forced to break the ice, "an impediment—a delay——"

On this, Maître Solonet came out of the inner room and interrupted his senior with a speech that restored Paul to life. Overwhelmed by the recollection of his own devoted speeches and lover-like attitude, Paul knew not how to withdraw or to modify them; he only longed to fling himself into some yawning gulf.

"There is a way of releasing Madame Evangelista from her debt to her daughter," said the young lawyer with airy ease. "Madame Evangelista holds securities for forty thousand francs yearly in five per cents; the capital will soon be at par, if not higher; we may call it eight hundred thousand francs. This house and garden are worth certainly two hundred thousand. Granting this, madame may, under the marriage contract, transfer the securities and title-deeds to her daughter, reserving only the life-interest, for I cannot suppose that the Count wishes to leave his mother-in-law penniless. Though madame has spent her own fortune, she will thus restore her daughter's, all but a trifling sum."

"Women are most unfortunate when they do not understand business," said Madame Evangelista. "I have securities and title-deeds? What in the world are they?"

Paul was enraptured as he heard this proposal. The old lawyer, seeing the snare spread and his client with one foot already caught in it, stood petrified, saying to himself:

"I believe we are being tricked!"

"If madame takes my advice, she will at least secure peace," the younger man went on. "If she sacrifices herself, at least she will not be worried by the young people. Who can foresee who will live or die?—Monsieur le Comte will then sign a release for the whole sum due to Mademoiselle Evangelista out of her father's fortune."

Mathias could not conceal the wrath that sparkled in his eyes and crimsoned his face.

"A sum of——?" he asked, trembling with indignation.

"Of one million one hundred and fifty-six thousand francs, according to the deed——"

"Why do you not ask Monsieur le Comte *hic et nunc* to renounce all claims on his wife's fortune?" said Mathias. "It would be more straightforward.—Well, Monsieur le Comte de Manerville's ruin shall not be accomplished under my eyes. I beg to withdraw."

He went a step towards the door, to show his client that the matter was really serious. But he turned back, and addressing Madame Evangelista, he said:

"Do you suppose, madame, that I imagine you to be in collusion with my colleague in his ideas. I believe you to be an honest woman—a fine lady, who knows nothing of business."

"Thank you, my dear sir!" retorted Solonet.

"You know that there is no question of offence among lawyers," said Mathias.—"But at least, madame, let me explain to you the upshot of this bargain. You are still young enough and handsome enough to marry again. Oh, dear me!" he went on, in reply to a gesture of the lady's, "who can answer for the future?"

"I never thought, monsieur," said she, "that after seven years of widowhood in the prime of life, and after refusing some splendid offers for my daughter's sake, I should, at nine-and-thirty, be thought capable of such madness.—If we were not discussing business, I should regard such a speech as an impertinence."

"Would it not be a greater impertinence to assume that you could not remarry?"

"Can and will are very different words," said Solonet, with a gallant flourish.

"Well," said Mathias, "we need not talk about your marrying. You may—and we all hope you will—live for five-and-forty years yet. Now, since you are to retain your life-interest in the income left by Monsieur Evangelista as long as you live, must your children dine with Duke Humphrey?"

"What is the meaning of it all?" said the widow. "Who is Duke Humphrey, and what is life-interest?"

Solonet, a speaker of elegance and taste, began to laugh.

"I will translate," said the old man: "If your children wish to be prudent, they will think of the future. To think of the future means to save half one's income, supposing there are no more than two children, who must first have a good education, and then a handsome marriage portion. Thus, your daughter and her husband will be reduced to living on twenty thousand francs a year when they have each been accustomed to spend fifty thousand while unmarried. And even that is nothing. My client will be expected to hand over to his children in due course eleven hundred thousand francs as their share of their mother's fortune, and he will never have received any of it if his wife should die and madame survive her—which is quite possible. In all conscience, is not this to throw himself into the Gironde, tied hand and foot? You wish to see Mademoiselle Natalie made happy? If she loves her husband—which no lawyer allows himself to doubt—she will share his troubles. Madame, I foresee enough to make her die of grief, for she will be miserably poor. Yes, madame, miserably poor; for it is poverty to those who require a hundred thousand francs a year to be reduced to twenty thousand. If love should lead Monsieur le Comte into extravagance, his wife would reduce him to beggary by claiming her share in the event of any disaster.

"I am arguing for your sake, for theirs, for that of their children—for all parties."

"The good man has certainly delivered a broadside," thought Solonet, with a glance at his client, as much as to say, "Come on!"

"There is a way of reconciling all these interests," replied Madame Evangelista. "I may reserve only such a small allowance as may enable me to go into a convent, and you will become at once possessed of all my property. I will renounce the world if my death to it will secure my daughter's happiness."

"Madame," said the old man, "let us take time for mature consideration of the steps that may smooth away all difficulties."

"Bless me, my dear sir," cried Madame Evangelista, who foresaw that by delay she would be lost, "all has been considered. I did not know what marriage meant in France; I am a Spanish Creole. I did not know that before I could see my daughter married, I had to make sure how many days longer God would grant me to live, that my child would be wronged by my living, that I have no business to be alive, or ever to have lived.

"When my husband married me I had nothing but my name and myself. My name alone was to him a treasure by which his wealth paled. What fortune can compare with a great name? My fortune was my beauty, virtue, happy temper, birth, and breeding. Can money buy these gifts? If Natalie's father could hear this discussion, his magnanimous spirit would be grieved for ever, and his happiness would be marred in Paradise. I spent millions of francs, foolishly I daresay, without his ever frowning even. Since his death I have been economical and thrifty by comparison with the life he liked me to lead. Let this end it! Monsieur de Manerville is so dejected that I——"

No words can represent the confusion and excitement produced by this exclamation "end it!" It is enough to say that these four well-bred persons all talked at once.

"In Spain you marry Spanish fashion, as you will; but in France, you marry French fashion—rationally, and as you can," said Mathias.

"Ah, madame," Paul began, rousing himself from his stupor, "you are mistaken in my feelings——"

"This is not a question of feelings," said the old man, anxious to stop his client; "this is business affecting three generations. Was it we who made away with the missing millions—we, who merely ask to clear up the difficulties of which we are innocent?"

"Let us marry without further haggling," said Solonet.

"Haggling! Haggling! Do you call it haggling to defend the interests of the children and of their father and mother?" cried Mathias.

"Yes," Paul went on, addressing his mother-in-law, "I deplore the recklessness of my youth, which now hinders my closing this discussion with a word, as much as you deplore your ignorance of business-matters and involuntary extravagance. God be my witness that at this moment I am not thinking of myself; a quiet life at Lanstrac has no terrors for me; but Mademoiselle Natalie would have to give up her tastes and habits. That would alter our whole existence."

"But where did Evangelista find his millions?" said the widow.

"Monsieur Evangelista was a man of business, he played the great game of commerce, he loaded ships and made considerable sums; we are a landed proprietor, our capital is sunk, and our income more or less fixed," the old lawyer replied.

"Still, there is a way out of the difficulty," said Solonet, speaking in a high-pitched key, and silencing the other three by attracting their attention and their eyes.

The young man was like a dexterous coachman who, holding the reins of a four-in-hand, amuses himself by lashing and, at the same time, holding in the team. He spurred their passions and soothed them by turns, making Paul foam in his harness, for to him life and happiness were in the balance; and his client as well, for she did not see her way through the intricacies of the dispute.

"Madame Evangelista may, this very day, hand over the securities in the five per cents, and sell this house. Sold in lots, it will fetch three hundred thousand francs. Madame will pay you one hundred and fifty thousand francs. Thus, madame will pay down nine hundred and fifty thousand francs at once. Though this is not all she owes her daughter, can you find many fortunes to match it in France?"

"Well and good," said Mathias; "but what is madame to live on?"

At this question, which implied assent, Solonet said within himself:

"Oh, ho! old fox, so you are caught."

"Madame?" he said aloud. "Madame will keep the fifty thousand crowns left of the price of the house. That sum, added to the sale of her furniture, can be invested in an annuity, and will give her twenty thousand francs a year. Monsieur le Comte will arrange for her to live with him. Lanstrac is a large place. You have a good house in Paris," he went on, addressing Paul, "so madame your mother-in-law can live with you wherever you are. A widow who, having no house to keep up, has twenty thousand francs a year, is better off than madame was when she was mistress of all her fortune. Madame Evangelista has no one to care for but her daughter; Monsieur le Comte also stands alone; your heirs are in the distant future, there is no fear of conflicting interests.

"A son-in-law and a mother-in-law under such circumstances always join to form one household. Madame Evangelista will make up for the deficit of capital by paying a quota out of her annuity which will help towards the housekeeping. We know her to be too generous, too large-minded, to live as a charge on her children.

"Thus, you may live happy and united with a hundred thousand francs a year to spend—a sufficient income, surely, Monsieur le Comte, to afford you, in any country, all the comforts of life and the indulgence of your fancies?—And, believe me, young married people often feel the need of a third in the household. Now, I ask you, what third can be more suitable than an affectionate, good mother?"

Paul, as he listened to Solonet, thought he heard the voice of an angel. He looked at Mathias to see if he did not share his admiration for Solonet's fervid eloquence; for he did not know that, under the assumed enthusiasm of impassioned words, notaries, like attorneys, hide the cold and unremitting alertness of the diplomatist.

"A petty Paradise!" said the old man.

Bewildered by his client's delight, Mathias sat down on an ottoman, resting his head on one hand, lost in evidently grieved meditations. He knew too well the ponderous phrases in which men of business purposely shroud their tricks, and he was not the man to be duped by them. He stole a glance at his fellow-notary and at Madame Evangelista, who went on talking to Paul, and he tried to detect some indications of the plot of which the elaborate design was beginning to be perceptible.

"Monsieur," said Paul to Solonet, "I have to thank you for the care you have devoted to the conciliation of our interests. This arrangement solves all difficulties more happily than I had dared to hope—that is to say, if it suits you, madame," he added, turning to Madame Evangelista, "for I will have nothing to say to any plan that is not equally satisfactory to you."

"I?" said she. "Whatever will make my children happy will delight me. Do not consider me at all."

"But that must not be," said Paul eagerly. "If your comfort and dignity were not secured, Natalie and I should be more distressed about it than you yourself would be."

"Do not be uneasy on that score, Monsieur le Comte," said Solonet.

"Ah!" thought Maître Mathias, "they mean to make him kiss the rod before they scourge him."

"Be quite easy," Solonet went on; "there is such a spirit of speculation in Bordeaux just now, that investments for annuities are to be made on very advantageous terms. After handing over to you the fifty thousand crowns due to you on the sale of the house and furniture, I believe I may guarantee to madame a residue of two hundred thousand francs. This I undertake to invest in an annuity on a first mortgage on an estate worth a million, and to get ten per cent, twenty-five thousand francs a year. Thus we should unite two very nearly equal fortunes. Mademoiselle Natalie will bring forty thousand francs a year in five per cents, and a hundred and fifty thousand francs in money, which will yield

seven thousand francs a year; total, forty-seven as against your forty-six thousand."

"That is quite plain," said Paul.

As he ended his speech, Solonet had cast a sidelong glance at his client, not unseen by Mathias, and which was as much as to say, "Bring up your reserve."

"Why!" cried Madame Evangelista, in a tone of joy that seemed quite genuine, "I can give Natalie my diamonds; they must be worth at least a hundred thousand francs."

"We can have them valued," said Solonet, "and this entirely alters the case. Nothing, then, can hinder Monsieur le Comte from giving a discharge in full for the sums due to Mademoiselle Natalie as her share of her father's fortune, or the betrothed couple from taking the guardian's accounts as passed, at the reading of the contract. If madame, with truly Spanish magnificence, despoils herself to fulfill her obligations within a hundred thousand francs of the sum-total, it is but fair to release her."

"Nothing could be fairer," said Paul. "I am only overpowered by so much generosity."

"Is not my daughter my second self?" said Madame Evangelista.

Maître Mathias detected an expression of joy on Madame Evangelista's face when she saw the difficulties so nearly set aside; and this, and the sudden recollection of the diamonds, brought out like fresh troops, confirmed all his suspicions.

"The scene was planned between them," thought he, "as gamblers pack the cards when some pigeon is to be rooked. So the poor boy I have known from his cradle is to be plucked alive by a mother-in-law, done brown by love, and ruined by his wife? After taking such care of his fine estate, am I to see it gobbled up in a single evening? Three millions and a-half mortgaged, in fact, to guarantee eleven hundred thousand francs of her portion, which these two women will make him throw away——"

As he thus discerned in Madame Evangelista's soul a scheme which was not dishonest or criminal—which was not

thieving, or cheating, or swindling—which was not based on any evil or blamable feeling, but yet contained the germ of every crime, Maître Mathias was neither shocked nor generously indignant. He was not a misanthrope; he was an old lawyer, inured by his business to the keen self-interest of men of the world, to their ingenious treachery, more deadly than a bold highway murder committed by some poor devil who is guillotined with due solemnity. In the higher ranks these passages of arms, these diplomatic discussions, are like the little dark corners in which every kind of filth is shot.

Maître Mathias, very sorry for his client, cast a long look into the future, and saw no hope of good.

"Well, we must take the field with the same weapons," said he to himself, "and beat them on their own ground."

At this juncture Paul, Solonet, and Madame Evangelista, dismayed by the old man's silence, were feeling the necessity of this stern censor's approbation to sanction these arrangements, and all three looked at him.

"Well, my dear sir, and what do you think of this?" asked Paul.

"This is what I think," replied the uncompromising and conscientious old man, "you are not rich enough to commit such princely follies. The estate of Lanstrac, valued at three per cent, is worth one million of francs, including the furniture; the farms of le Grassol and le Guadet, with the vineyards of Bellerose, are worth another million; your two residences and furniture a third million. To meet these three millions, yielding an income of forty-seven thousand two hundred francs, Mademoiselle Natalie shows eight hundred thousand francs in the funds, and let us say one hundred thousand francs' worth of diamonds—at a hypothetical valuation! Also, one hundred and fifty thousand francs in cash—one million and fifty thousand francs in all. Then, in the face of these facts, my friend here triumphantly asserts that we are uniting equal fortunes! He requires us to stand indebted in a hundred thousand francs to our children, since we are to give the lady a discharge in full, by taking the

guardian's accounts as passed, for a sum of eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs, while receiving only one million and fifty thousand!

"You can listen to this nonsense with a lover's rapture; and do you suppose that old Mathias, who is not in love, will forget his arithmetic and fail to appreciate the difference between landed estate of enormous value as capital, and of increasing value, and the income derivable from money in securities which are liable to variations in value and diminution of interest. I am old enough to have seen land improve and funds fall.—You called me in, Monsieur le Comte, to stipulate for your interests; allow me to protect them or dismiss me."

"If monsieur looks for a fortune of which the capital is a match for his own," said Solonet, "we have nothing like three millions and a half; that is self-evident. If you can show these overpowering millions, we have but our one poor little million to offer—a mere trifle! three times as much as the dower of an Archduchess of Austria. Bonaparte received two hundred and fifty thousand francs when he married Marie Louise."

"Marie Louise ruined Napoleon," said Maître Mathias in a growl.

Natalie's mother understood the bearing of this speech.

"If my sacrifices are in vain," she exclaimed, "I decline to carry such a discussion any further; I trust to the Count's discretion, and renounce the honor of his proposals for my daughter."

After the manœuvres planned by the young notary this battle of conflicting interests had reached the point where the victory ought to have rested with Madame Evangelista. The mother-in-law had opened her heart, abandoned her possessions, and was almost released. The intending husband was bound to accept the conditions laid down beforehand by the collusion of Maître Solonet and his client, or sin against every law of generosity, and be false to his love.

Like the hand of the clock moved by the works, Paul came duly to the point.

"What, madame," cried he, "you could undo in one moment——"

"Why, monsieur, to whom do I owe my duty? To my daughter.—When she is one-and-twenty she will pass my accounts and release me. She will have a million francs, and can, if she pleases, choose among the sons of the peers of France. Is she not the daughter of a Casa-Real?"

"Madame is quite justified. Why should she be worse off to-day than she will be fourteen months hence? Do not rob her of the benefits of her position," said Solonet.

"Mathias," said Paul, with deep grief, "there are two ways of being ruined—and at this moment you have undone me!"

He went towards the old lawyer, no doubt intending to order that the contract should be at once drawn up. Mathias forefended this disaster by a glance which seemed to say, "Wait!" He saw tears in Paul's eyes—tears of shame at the tenor of this debate, and at the peremptory tone in which Madame Evangelista had thrown him over—and he checked them by a start, the start of Archimedes crying *Eureka!*

The words *Peer of France* had flashed light on his mind like a torch in a cavern.

At this instant Natalie reappeared, as lovely as the dawn, and said with an innocent air:

"Am I in the way?"

"Strangely in the way, my child!" replied her mother, with cruel bitterness.

"Come, dear Natalie," said Paul, taking her hand and leading her to a chair by the fire, "everything is settled!" for he could not endure to think that his hopes were overthrown.

And Mathias eagerly put in:

"Yes, everything can yet be settled."

Like a general who in one move baffles the tactics of the enemy, the old lawyer had had a vision of the Genius that watches over notaries, unfolding before him in legal script

a conception that might save the future prospects of Paul and of his children. Maître Solonet knew of no other issue from these irreconcilable difficulties than the determination to which the young Count had been led by love, and by this storm of contending feelings and interests; so he was excessively surprised by his senior's remark.

Curious to know what remedy Maître Mathias had to suggest for a state of things which must have seemed to him past all hope, he asked him:

"What have you to propose!"

"Natalie, my dear child, leave us," said Madame Evangelista.

"Mademoiselle is not *de trop,*" replied Maître Mathias, with a smile. "I speak as much for her as for Monsieur le Comte."

There was a solemn silence, each one in great excitement awaiting the old man's speech with the utmost curiosity.

"In our day," Mathias went on after a pause, "the notary's profession has changed in many ways. In our day political revolutions affect the future prospects of families, and this used not to be the case. Formerly life ran in fixed grooves, ranks were clearly defined——"

"We are not here to listen to a lecture on political economy, but to arrange a marriage contract," said Solonet, with flippant impatience, and interrupting the old man.

"I beg you to allow me to speak in my turn," said Mathias.

Solonet took his seat on the ottoman, saying to Madame Evangelista in an undertone:

"Now you will learn what we lawyers mean by rigmarole."

"Notaries are consequently obliged to watch the course of politics, since they now are intimately concerned with private affairs. To give you an instance: Formerly noble families had inalienable fortunes, but the Revolution overthrew them; the present system tends to reconstructing such fortunes," said the old man, indulging somewhat in the twaddle of the

tabellionaris boa constrictor. "Now, Monsieur le Comte, in virtue of his name, his talents, and his wealth, is evidently destined to sit some day in the lower Chamber; destiny may perhaps lead him to the upper and hereditary Chamber; and as we know, he has every qualification that may justify our prognostics.—Are you not of my opinion, madame?" said he to the widow.

"You have anticipated my dearest hope," said she. "Manerville must be a Peer of France, or I shall die of grief."

"All that may tend to that end——?" said Maître Mathias, appealing to the mother-in-law with a look of frank good humor.

"Answers to my dearest wish," she put in.

"Well, then," said Mathias, "is not this marriage a fitting opportunity for creating an entail? Such a foundation will most certainly be an argument in the eyes of the present government for the nomination of my client when a batch of peers is created. Monsieur le Comte will, of course, dedicate to this purpose the estate of Lanstrac, worth about a million. I do not ask that Mademoiselle should contribute an equal sum; that would not be fair; but we may take eight hundred thousand francs of her money for the purpose. I know of two estates for sale at this moment, bordering on the lands of Lanstrac, in which those eight hundred thousand francs, to be sunk in real estate, may be invested at four and a half per cent. The Paris house ought also to be included in the entail. The surplus of the two fortunes, wisely managed, will amply suffice to provide for the younger children.—If the contracting parties can agree as to these details, Monsieur de Manerville may then pass your guardian's accounts and be chargeable for the balance. I will consent."

"*Questa coda non è di quetso gatto!*" (this tail does not fit that cat) exclaimed Madame Evangelista, looking at her sponser Solonet, and pointing to Maître Mathias.

"There is something behind all this," said Solonet in an undertone.

"And what is all this muddle for?" Paul asked of Mathias, going with him into the adjoining room.

"To save you from ruin," said the old notary in a whisper. "You are quite bent on marrying a girl—and her mother—who have made away with two millions of francs in seven years; you are accepting a debt of more than a hundred thousand francs to your children, to whom you will some day have to hand over eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs on their mother's behalf, when you are receiving hardly a million. You run the risk of seeing your whole fortune melt away in five years, leaving you as bare as St. John the Baptist, while you will remain the debtor in enormous sums to your wife and her representatives.—If you choose to embark in that boat, go on, Monsieur le Comte; but at least allow your old friend to save the house of Manerville."

"But how will this save it?" asked Paul.

"Listen, Monsieur le Comte; you are very much in love?"

"Yes," replied Paul.

"A man in love is about as secret as a cannon shot; I will tell you nothing!—If you were to repeat things, your marriage might come to nothing, so I place your love under the protection of my silence. You trust to my fidelity?"

"What a question!"

"Well, then, let me tell you that Madame Evangelista, her notary, and her daughter were playing a trick on us all through, and are more than clever. By Heaven, what sharp practice!"

"Natalie?" cried Paul.

"Well, I will not swear to that," said the old man. "You want her—take her! But I wish this marriage might fall through without the smallest blame to you!"

"Why?"

"That girl would beggar Peru. . . . Besides, she rides like a circus-rider; she is what you may call emancipated. Women of that sort make bad wives."

Paul pressed his old friend's hand and replied with a little fatuous smile.

"Don't be alarmed.—And for the moment, what must I do?"

"Stand firm to these conditions; they will consent, for the bargain does not damage their interests. And besides, all Madame Evangelista wants is to get her daughter married; I have seen her hand; do not trust her."

Paul returned to the drawing-room, where he found the widow talking in low tones to Solonet, just as he had been talking to Mathias. Natalie, left out of this mysterious conference, was playing with a screen. Somewhat out of countenance, she was wondering, "What absurdity keeps me from all knowledge of my own concerns?"

The younger lawyer was talking in the general outlines and remote effects of a stipulation based on the personal pride of the parties concerned, into which his client had blindly rushed. But though Mathias was now nothing else but a notary, Solonet was still to some degree a man, and carried some juvenile conceit into his dealings. It often happens that personal vanity makes a young lawyer forgetful of his client's interests. Under these circumstances, Maître Solonet, who would not allow the widow to think that Nestor was beating Achilles, was advising her to conclude the matter at once on these lines. Little did he care for the ultimate fulfilment of the contract; to him victory meant the release of Madame Evangelista with an assured income, and the marriage of Natalie.

"All Bordeaux will know that you have settled about eleven hundred thousand francs on your daughter, and that you still have twenty-five thousand francs a year," said Solonet in the lady's ear. "I had not hoped for such a brilliant result."

"But," said she, "explain to me why the creation of an entail should so immediately have stilled the storm."

"Distrust of you and your daughter. An entailed estate is inalienable: neither husband nor wife can touch it."

"That is a positive insult."

"Oh, no. We call that foresight. The good man caught you in a snare. If you refuse the entail, he will say, 'Then you want to squander my client's fortune'; whereas, if

he creates an entail, it is out of all risk, just as if the couple were married under the provisions of the trust."

Solonet silenced his own scruples by reflecting:

"These stipulations will only take effect in the remote future, and by that time Madame Evangelista will be dead and buried."

She, for her part, was satisfied with Solonet's explanation; she had entire confidence in him. She was perfectly ignorant of the law; she saw her daughter married, and that was all she asked for the nonce; she was delighted at their success. And so, as Mathias suspected, neither Solonet nor Madame Evangelista as yet understood the full extent of his plan, which had incontrovertible reasons to support it.

"Well, then, Monsieur Mathias," said the widow, "everything is satisfactory."

"Madame, if you and Monsieur le Comte agree to these conditions, you should exchange pledges.—It is fully understood by you both, it is not," he went on, "that the marriage takes place only on condition of the creation of an entail, including the estate of Lanstrac and the house in the Rue de la Pépinière, both belonging to the intending husband, *item* eight hundred thousand francs deducted in money from the portion of the intending wife to be invested in land? Forgive me, madame, for repeating this; a solemn and positive pledge is necessary in such a case. The formation of an entail requires many formalities—it must be registered in Chancery and receive the royal signature; and we ought to proceed at once to the purchase of the lands, so as to include them in the schedule of property which the royal patent renders inalienable.—In many families a document would be required; but, as between you, verbal consent will no doubt be sufficient. Do you both consent?"

"Yes," said Madame Evangelista.

"Yes," said Paul.

"And how about me?" asked Natalie, laughing.

"You, mademoiselle, are a minor," replied Solonet, "and that need not distress you!"

It was then agreed that Maître Mathias should draw up the contract, and Maître Solonet audit the guardian's accounts, and that all the papers should be signed, in agreement with the law, a day or two before the wedding.

After a few civilities the lawyers rose.

"It is raining, Mathias; shall I take you home? I have my cab here," said Solonet.

"My carriage is at your service," said Paul, preparing to accompany the good man.

"I will not rob you of a minute," said the old man; "I will accept my friend's offer."

"Well," said Achilles to Nestor, as the carriage rolled on its way, "you have been truly patriarchal. Those young people would, no doubt, have ruined themselves."

"I was uneasy about the future," said Mathias, not betraying the real motive of his proposal.

At this moment the two lawyers were like two actors who shake hands behind the scenes after playing on the stage a scene of hatred and provocation.

"But is it not my business," said Solonet, who was thinking of technicalities, "to purchase the lands of which you speak? Is it not our money that is to be invested?"

"How can you include Mademoiselle Evangelista's land in an entail created by the Comte de Manerville?" asked Mathias.

"That difficulty can be settled in Chancery," said Solonet.

"But I am the seller's notary as well as the buyer's," replied Mathias. "Besides, Monsieur de Manerville can purchase in his own name. When it comes to paying, we can state the use of the wife's portion."

"You have an answer for everything, my worthy senior," said Solonet, laughing. "You have been grand this evening, and you have beaten us."

"Well, for an old fellow unprepared for your batteries loaded with grape-shot, it was not so bad, heh?"

"Ah, ha!" laughed Solonet.

The tedious contest in which the happiness of a family had

been so narrowly risked was to them no more than a matter of legal polemics. "We have not gone through forty years of chicanery for nothing," said Mathias. "Solonet," he added, "I am a good-natured fellow; you may be present at the sale and purchase of the lands to be added to the estate."

"Thank you, my good friend! You will find me at your service in case of need."

While the two notaries were thus peaceably going on their way, with no emotion beyond a little dryness of the throat, Paul and Madame Evangelista were suffering from the nervous trepidation, the fluttering about the heart, the spasm of brain and spine, to which persons of strong passions are prone after a scene when their interests or their feelings have been severely attacked. In Madame Evangelista these mutterings of the dispersing storm were aggravated by a terrible thought, a lurid gleam that needed explanation.

"Has not Maître Mathias overthrown my six months' labors?" she wondered. "Has he not destroyed my influence over Paul by filling him with base suspicions during their conference in the inner room?"

She stood in front of the fireplace, her elbow resting on the corner of the mantelpiece, lost in thought.

When the outer gate closed behind the notary's carriage, she turned to her son-in-law, eager to settle her doubts.

"This has been the most terrible day of my life," cried Paul, really glad to see the end of all these difficulties. "I know no tougher customer than old Mathias. God grant his wishes and make me peer of France! Dear Natalie, I desire it more for your sake than for my own. You are my sole ambiion. I live in and for you."

On hearing these words spoken from the heart, and especially as she looked into Paul's clear eyes, whose look was as free from any concealment as his open brow, Madame Evangelista's joy was complete. She blamed herself for the somewhat sharp terms in which she had tried to spur her

son-in-law, and in the triumph of success determined to make all smooth for the future. Her face was calm again, and her eyes expressed the sweet friendliness that made her so attractive as she replied:

"I may truly say the same. And perhaps, my dear boy, my Spanish temper carried me further than my heart intended. Be always what you are—as good as gold! And owe me no grudge for a few ill-considered words. Give me your hand——"

Paul was overwhelmed; he blamed himself in a thousand things, and embraced Madame Evangelista.

"Dear Paul," said she with emotion, "why could not those two scriveners arrange matters without us, since it has all come right in the end?"

"But then," said Paul, "I should not have known how noble and generous you could be."

"Well said, Paul!" cried Natalie, taking his hand.

"We have several little matters to settle yet, my dear boy," said Madame Evangelista. "My daughter and I are superior to the follies which some people think so much of. For instance, Natalie will need no diamonds—I give her mine."

"Oh! my dear mother, do you suppose I should accept them?" cried Natalie.

"Yes, my child, they are a condition of the contract."

"I will not have them! I will never marry!" said Natalie vehemently. "Keep what my father gave you with so much pleasure. How can Monsieur Paul demand——"

"Be silent, dear child," said her mother, her eyes filling with tears; "my ignorance of business requires far more than that."

"What?"

"I must sell this house to pay you what I owe you."

"What can you owe to me," said the girl—"to me, who owe my life to you? Can I ever repay you, on the contrary? If my marriage is to cost you the smallest sacrifice, I will never marry!"

"You are but a child!"

"My dear Natalie," said Paul, "you must understand that it is neither I, nor you, nor your mother who insists on these sacrifices, but the children——"

"But if I do not marry," she interrupted.

"Then you do not love me?" said Paul.

"Come, silly child," said her mother; "do you suppose that a marriage contract is a house of cards to be blown down at your pleasure? Poor ignorant darling, you do not know what trouble we have been at to create an entailed estate for your eldest son. Do not throw us back into the troubles we have escaped from."

"But why ruin my mother?" said Natalie to Paul.

"Why are you so rich?" he said, with a smile.

"Do not discuss the matter too far, my children; you are not married yet," said Madame Evangelista. "Paul," she went on, "Natalie needs no wedding gifts, no jewels, no trousseau; she has everything in profusion. Save the money you would have spent in presents to secure to yourselves some permanent home luxuries. There is nothing to my mind so foolishly vulgar as the expenditure of a hundred thousand francs in a *corbeille,** of which nothing is left at last but an old white satin-covered trunk. Five thousand francs a year, on the other hand, as pin-money, save a young wife many small cares, and are hers for life. And indeed you will want the money of the *corbeille* to refurnish your house in Paris this winter. We will come back to Lanstrac in the spring; Solonet will have settled all our affairs in the course of the winter."

"Then all is well," said Paul, at the height of happiness.

"And I shall see Paris!" cried Natalie, in a tone that might indeed have alarmed a de Marsay.

"If that is quite settled, I will write to de Marsay to secure a box for the winter season at the Italian opera."

"You are most nice! I dared not ask it of you," said Natalie. "Marriage is a delightful institution if it gives husbands the power of guessing their wives' wishes."

* The bridegroom's presents of lace, jewels, and apparel constitute the *corbeille.*

"That is precisely what it is," said Paul. "But it is midnight—I must go."

"Why so early this evening?" said Madame Evangelista, who was lavish of the attentions to which men are so keenly alive.

Though the whole business had been conducted on terms of the most refined politeness, the effect of this clashing of interests had sown a germ of distrust and hostility between the lady and her son-in-law, ready to develop at the first spark of anger, or under the heat of a too strong display of feeling.

In most families the question of settlements and allowances under the marriage contract is prone to give rise to these primitive conflicts, stirred up by wounded pride or injured feelings, by some reluctance to make any sacrifice, or the desire to minimize it. When a difficulty arises, must there not be a conqueror and a conquered? The parents of the plighted couple try to bring the affair to a happy issue; in their eyes it is a purely commercial transaction, allowing all the tricks, the profits, and the deceptions of trade. As a rule, the husband only is initiated into the secret of the transaction, and the young wife remains, as did Natalie, ignorant of the stipulations which make her rich or poor.

Paul, as he went home, reflected that, thanks to his lawyer's ingenuity, his fortune was almost certainly secured against ruin. If Madame Evangelista lived with her daughter, the household would have more than a hundred thousand francs a year for ordinary expenses. Thus his hopes of a happy life would be realized.

"My mother-in-law seems to me a very good sort of woman," he reflected, still under the influence of the wheedling ways by which Madame Evangelista had succeeded in dissipating the clouds raised by the discussion. "Mathias is mistaken. These lawyers are strange beings; they poison everything. The mischief was made by that contentious little Solonet, who wanted to be clever."

While Paul, as he went to bed, was recapitulating the ad-

vantages he had won in the course of the evening, Madame Evangelista was no less confident of having gained the victory.

"Well, darling mother, are you satisfied?" said Natalie, following her mother into her bedroom.

"Yes, my love, everything has succeeded as I wished, and I feel a weight taken off my shoulders, which crushed me this morning. Paul is really an excellent fellow. Dear boy! Yes, we can certainly give him a delightful life. You will make him happy, and I will take care of his political prospects. The Spanish ambassador is an old friend of mine. I will renew my acquaintance with him and with several other persons. We shall soon be in the heart of politics, and all will be well with us. The pleasure for you, dear children; for me the later occupations of life—the game of ambition.

"Do not be alarmed at my selling this house; do you suppose we should ever return to Bordeaux? To Lanstrac—yes. But we shall spend every winter in Paris, where our true interests now lie.—Well, Natalie, was what I asked you so difficult to do?"

"My dear mother, I was ashamed at moments."

"Solonet advises me to buy an annuity with the price of the house," said Madame Evangelista, "but I must make some other arrangement. I will not deprive you of one sou of my capital."

"You were all very angry, I saw," said Natalie. "How was the storm appeased?"

"By the offer of my diamonds," replied her mother. "Solonet was in the right. How cleverly he managed the business! But fetch my jewel-box, Natalie. I never seriously inquired what those diamonds were worth. When I said a hundred thousand francs, it was absurd. Did not Madame de Gyas declare that the necklace and earrings your father gave me on the day of our wedding were alone worth as much? My poor husband was so lavish!—And then the family diamond given by Philip II. to the Duke of Alva, and left to me by my aunt—the *Discreto*—was, I believe, valued then at four thousand quadruples."

Natalie brought out and laid on her mother's dressing-table pearl necklaces, sets of jewels, gold bracelets, gems of every kind, piling them up with the inexpressible satisfaction that rejoices the heart of some women at the sight of these valuables, with which, according to the Talmud, the fallen angels tempted the daughters of men, bringing up from the bowels of the earth these blossoms of celestial fires.

"Certainly," said Madame Evangelista, "although I know nothing of precious stones but how to accept them and wear them, it seems to me that these must be worth a great deal of money. And then, if we all live together, I can sell my plate, which is worth thirty thousand francs at the mere value of the silver. I remember when we brought it from Lima that was the valuation at the Custom House here.—Solonet is right. I will send for Élie Magus. The Jew will tell me the value of these stones. I may perhaps escape sinking the rest of my capital in an annuity."

"What a beautiful string of pearls!" said Natalie.

"I hope he will give you that if he loves you. Indeed, he ought to have all the stones reset and make them a present to you. The diamonds are yours by settlement.—Well, good-night, my darling. After such a fatiguing day, we both need sleep."

The woman of fashion, the Creole, the fine lady, incapable of understanding the conditions of a contract that was not yet drawn up, fell asleep in full content at seeing her daughter the wife of a man she could so easily manage, who would leave them to be on equal terms the mistresses of his house, and whose fortune, combined with their own, would allow of their living in the way to which they were accustomed. Even after paying up her daughter, for whose whole fortune she was to receive a discharge, Madame Evangelista would still have enough to live upon.

"How absurd I was to be so worried!" said she to herself. "I wish the marriage was over and done with."

So Madame Evangelista, Paul, Natalie, and the two lawyers were all delighted with the results of this first meeting. The

Te Deum was sung in both camps—a perilous state of things! The moment must come when the vanquished would no longer be deluded. To Madame Evangelista her son-in-law was conquered.

Next morning Élie Magus came to the widow's house, supposing, from the rumors current as to Mademoiselle Natalie's approaching marriage to Count Paul, that they wanted to purchase diamonds. What, then, was his surprise on learning that he was wanted to make a more or less official valuation of the mother-in-law's jewels. The Jewish instinct, added to a few insidious questions, led him to conclude that the value was to be included in the property under the marriage contract.

As the stones were not for sale, he priced them as a merchant selling to a private purchaser. Experts alone know Indian diamonds from those of Brazil. The stones from Golconda and Vizapur are distinguishable by a whiteness and clear brilliancy which the others have not, their hue being yellower, and this depreciates their selling value. Madame Evangelista's necklace and earrings, being entirely composed of Asiatic stones, was valued by Élie Magus at two hundred and fifty thousand francs. As to the *Discreto,* it was, he said, one of the finest diamonds extant in private hands, and was worth a hundred thousand francs.

On hearing these figures, which showed her how liberal her husband had been, Madame Evangelista asked whether she could have that sum at once.

"If you wish to sell them, madame," said the Jew, "I can only give you seventy thousand francs for the single stone, and a hundred and sixty thousand for the necklace and earrings."

"And why such a reduction?" asked Madame Evangelista in surprise.

"Madame," said he, "the finer the jewels, the longer we have to keep them. The opportunities for sale are rare in proportion to the greater value of the diamonds. As the dealer cannot lose the interest on his money, the recoupment

for that interest, added to the risks of rise and fall in the market, accounts for the difference between the selling and purchasing value.—For twenty years you have been losing the interest of three hundred thousand francs. If you have worn your diamonds ten times a year, it has cost you a thousand crowns each time. How many handsome dresses you might have had for a thousand crowns! Persons who keep their diamonds are fools; however, happily for us, ladies do not understand these calculations."

"I am much obliged to you for having explained them to me; I will profit by the lesson."

"Then you want to sell?" cried the Jew eagerly.

"What are the rest worth?" said Madame Evangelista.

The Jew examined the gold of the settings, held the pearls to the light, turned over the rubies, the tiaras, brooches, bracelets, clasps, and chains, and mumbled out:

"There are several Portuguese diamonds brought from Brazil. I cannot give more than a hundred thousand francs for the lot. But sold to a customer," he added, "they would fetch more than fifty thousand crowns."

"We will keep them," said the lady.

"You are wrong," replied Élie Magus. "With the income of the sum now sunk in them, in five years you could buy others just as fine, and still have the capital."

This rather singular interview was soon known, and confirmed the rumors to which the discussion of the contract had given rise. In a provincial town everything is known. The servants of the house, having heard loud voices, supposed the dispute to have been warmer than it was; their gossip with other folks' servants spread far and wide, and from the lower depths came up to the masters. The attention of the upper and citizen circles was concentrated on the marriage of two persons of equal wealth. Everybody, great and small, talked the matter over, and within a week the strangest reports were afloat in Bordeaux.—Madame Evangelista was selling her house, so she must be ruined.—She had offered her diamonds to Élie Magus.—Nothing was yet final between her and the

Comte de Manerville.—Would the marriage ever come off? Some said, Yes; others said, No. The two lawyers, on being questioned, denied these calumnies, and said that the difficulties were purely technical, arising from the formalities of creating an entail.

But when public opinion has rushed down an incline, it is very difficult to get it up again. Though Paul went every day to Madame Evangelista's, and in spite of the assertions of the two notaries, the insinuated slander held its own. Several young ladies, and their mothers or their aunts, aggrieved by a match of which they or their families had dreamed for themselves, could no more forgive Madame Evangelista for her good luck than an author forgives his friend for a success. Some were only too glad to be avenged for the twenty years of luxury and splendor by which the Spaniards had crushed their vanities. A bigwig at the Préfecture declared that the two notaries and the two parties concerned could say no more, nor behave otherwise, if the rupture were complete. The time it took to settle the entail confirmed the suspicions of the citizens of Bordeaux.

"They will sit by the chimney-corner all the winter; then, in the spring, they will go to some watering-place; and in the course of the year we shall hear that the match is broken off."

"You will see," said one set, "in order to save the credit of both parties, the obstacles will not have arisen on either side; there will be some demur in Chancery, some hitch discovered by the lawyers to hinder the entail."

"Madame Evangelista," said the others, "has been living at a rate that would have exhausted the mines of Valenciana. Then, when pay-day came round there was nothing to be found."

What a capital opportunity for calculating the handsome widow's expenditure, so as to prove her ruin to a demonstration! Rumor ran so high that bets were laid for and against the marriage. And, in accordance with the accepted rules of society, this tittle-tattle remained unknown to the interested

parties. No one was sufficiently inimical to Paul or Madame Evangelista to attack them on the subject.

Paul had some business at Lanstrac and took advantage of it to make up a shooting-party, inviting some of the young men of the town as a sort of farewell to his bachelor life. This shooting-party was regarded by society as a flagrant confirmation of its suspicions.

At this juncture Madame de Gyas, who had a daughter to marry, thought it well to sound her way, and to rejoice sadly over the checkmate offered to Madame Evangelista. Natalie and her mother were not a little astonished to see the Marquise's badly-assumed distress, and asked her if anything had annoyed her.

"Why," said she, "can you be ignorant of the reports current in Bordeaux? Though I feel sure that they are false, I have come to ascertain the truth and put a stop to them, at any rate in my own circle of friends. To be the dupe or the accomplice of such a misapprehension is to be in a false position, which no true friend can endure to remain in."

"But what in the world is happening?" asked the mother and daughter.

Madame de Gyas then had the pleasure of repeating everybody's comments, not sparing her intimate friends a single dagger-thrust. Natalie and her mother looked at each other and laughed; but they quite understood the purpose and motives of their friend's revelation. The Spanish lady revenged herself much as Célimène did on Arsinoé.

"My dear—you who know what provincial life is—you must know of what a mother is capable when she has a daughter on her hands who does not marry, for lack of a fortune and a lover, of beauty and talent—for lack of everything sometimes!—She would rob a diligence, she would commit murder, waylay a man at a street corner, and give herself away a hundred times, if she were worth giving. There are plenty such in Bordeaux, who are ready, no doubt, to attribute to us their thoughts and actions.—Naturalists have described the manners and customs of many fierce animals,

but they have overlooked the mother and daughter in quest of a husband. They are hyænas who, as the Psalmist has it, seek whom they may devour, and who add to the nature of the wild beast the intelligence of man and the genius of woman.

"That such little Bordeaux spiders as Mademoiselle de Belor, Mademoiselle de Trans, and their like, who have spread their nets for so long without seeing a fly, or hearing the least hum of wings near them—that they should be furious I understand, and I forgive them their venomous tattle. But that you, who have a title and money, who are not in the least provincial, who have a clever and accomplished daughter, pretty and free to pick and choose—that you, so far above everybody here by your Parisian elegance, should have taken such a tone, is really a matter of astonishment. Am I expected to account to the public for the matrimonial stipulations which our men of business have considered necessary under the political conditions which will govern my son-in-law's existence? Is the mania for public discussion to invade the privacy of family life? Ought I to have invited the fathers and mothers of your province, under sealed covers, to come and vote on the articles of our marriage contract?"

A torrent of epigrams was poured out on Bordeaux.

Madame Evangelista was about to leave the town; she could afford to criticise her friends and enemies, to caricature them, and lash them at will, having nothing to fear from them. So she gave vent to all the remarks she had stored up, the revenges she had postponed, and her surprise that any one should deny the existence of the sun at noonday.

"Really, my dear," said the Marquise de Gyas, "Monsieur de Manerville's visit to Lanstrac, these parties to young men —under the circumstances——"

"Really, my dear," retorted the fine lady, interrupting her, "can you suppose that we care for the trumpery proprieties of a middle-class marriage? Am I to keep Count Paul in leading-strings, as if he would run away? Do you think he

needs watching by the police? Need we fear his being spirited away by some Bordeaux conspiracy?"

"Believe me, my dear friend, you give me infinite pleasure——"

The Marquise was cut short in her speech by the man-servant announcing Paul. Like all lovers, Paul had thought it delightful to ride eight leagues in order to spend an hour with Natalie. He had left his friends to their sport, and came in, booted and spurred, his whip in his hand.

"Dear Paul," said Natalie, "you have no idea how effectually you are answering madame at this moment."

When Paul heard the calumnies that were rife in Bordeaux, he laughed instead of being angry.

"The good people have heard, no doubt, that there will be none of the gay and uproarious doings usual in the country, no midday ceremony in church, and they are furious.—Well, dear mother," said he, kissing Madame Evangelista's hand, "we will fling a ball at their heads on the day when the contract is signed, as a fête is thrown to the mob in the square of the Champs-Elysées, and give our good friends the painful pleasure of such a signing as is rarely seen in a provincial city!"

This incident was of great importance. Madame Evangelista invited all Bordeaux on the occasion, and expressed her intention of displaying in this final entertainment a magnificence that should give the lie unmistakably to silly and false reports. She was thus solemnly pledged to the world to carry through this marriage.

The preparations for this ball went on for forty days, and it was known as the "evening of the camellias," they were such immense numbers of these flowers on the stairs, in the ante-room, and in the great supper-room. The time agreed with the necessary delay for the preliminary formalities of the marriage, and the steps taken in Paris for the settlement of the entail. The lands adjoining Lanstrac were purchased, the banns were published, and doubts were dispelled.

Friends and foes had nothing left to think about but the preparation of their dresses for the great occasion.

The time taken up by these details overlaid the difficulties raised at the first meeting, and carried away into oblivion the words and retorts of the stormy altercation that had arisen over the question of the settlements. Neither Paul nor his mother-in-law thought any more of the matter. Was is not, as Madame Evangelista had said, the lawyers' business? But who is there that has not known, in the rush of a busy phase of life, what it is to be suddenly startled by the voice of memory, speaking too late, and recalling some important fact, some imminent danger?

On the morning of the day when the contract was to be signed, one of these will-o'-the-wisps of the brain flashed upon Madame Evangelista between sleeping and waking. The phrase spoken by herself at the moment when Mathias agreed to Solonet's proposal was, as it were, shouted in her ear: *Questa coda non è di questo gatto.* In spite of her ignorance of business, Madame Evangelista said to herself, "If that sharp old lawyer is satisfied, it is at the expense of one or other of the parties." And the damaged interest was certainly not on Paul's side, as she had hoped. Was it her daughter's fortune, then, that was to pay the costs of the war? She resolved to make full inquiries as to the tenor of the bargain, though she did not consider what she could do in the event of finding her own interests too seriously compromised.

The events of this day had so serious an influence on Paul's married life, that it is necessary to give some account of the external details which have their effect on every mind.

As the house was forthwith to be sold, the Comte de Manerville's mother-in-law had hesitated at no expense. The forecourt was graveled, covered with a tent, and filled with shrubs, though it was winter. The camellias, which were talked of from Dax to Angoulême, decked the stairs and vestibules. A wall had been removed to enlarge the supper-


F.C.TILNEY

Paul and Natalie sat by the fire on a little sofa



room and ballroom. Bordeaux, splendid with the luxury of many a colonial fortune, eagerly anticipated a fairy scene. By eight o'clock, when the business was drawing to a close, the populace, curious to see the ladies' dresses, formed a hedge on each side of the gateway. Thus the heady atmosphere of a great festivity excited all concerned at the moment of signing the contract. At the very crisis the little lamps fixed on yew-trees were already lighted, and the rumbling of the first carriages came up from the forecourt.

The two lawyers had dined with the bride and bridegroom and the mother-in-law. Mathias' head-clerk, who was to see the contract signed by certain of the guests in the course of the evening, and to take care that it was not read, was also one of the party.

The reader will rack his memory in vain—no dress, no woman was ever to compare with Natalie's beauty in her satin and lace, her hair beautifully dressed in a mass of curls falling about her neck; she was like a flower in its natural setting of foliage.

Madame Evangelista, in a cherry-colored velvet, cleverly designed to set off the brilliancy of her eyes, her complexion, and her hair, with all the beauty of a woman of forty, wore her pearl necklace clasped with the famous *Discreto,* to give the lie to slander.

Fully to understand the scene, it is necessary to remark that Paul and Natalie sat by the fire on a little sofa, and never listened to one word of the guardian's accounts. One as much a child as the other, both equally happy, he in his hopes, she in her expectant curiosity, seeing life one calm blue heaven, rich, young, and in love, they never ceased whispering in each other's ear. Paul, already regarding his passion as legalized, amused himself with kissing the tips of Natalie's fingers, or just touching her snowy shoulders or her hair, hiding the raptures of these illicit joys from every eye. Natalie was playing with a screen of peacock feathers, a gift from Paul—a luckless omen in love, if we may accept the superstitious belief of some countries, as fatal as that of

scissors, or any other cutting instrument, which is based, no doubt, on some association with the mythological Fates.

Madame Evangelista, sitting by the notaries, paid the closest attention to the reading of the two documents. After hearing the schedule of her accounts, very learnedly drawn out by Solonet, which showed a reduction of the three millions and some hundred thousand francs left by Monsieur Evangelista, to the famous eleven hundred and fifty-six thousand francs constituting Natalie's portion, she called out to the young couple:

"Come, listen, children; this is your marriage contract."

The clerk drank a glass of sugared water; Solonet and Mathias blew their noses; Paul and Natalie looked at the four personages, listened to the preamble, and then began to talk together again. The statements of revenues; the settlement of the whole estate on either party in the event of the other's death without issue; the bequest, according to law, of one-quarter of the whole property absolutely to the wife, and of the interest of one-quarter more, however many children should survive; the schedule of the property held in common; the gift of the diamonds on the wife's part, and of the books and horses on the husband's—all passed without remark. Then came the settlement for the entail. And when everything had been read, and there was nothing to be done but to sign, Madame Evangelista asked what would be the effect of the entail.

"The entailed estate, madame, is inalienable; it is property separated from the general estate of the married pair, and reserved for the eldest son of the house from generation to generation, without his being thereby deprived of his share of the rest of the property."

"And what are the consequences to my daughter?" she asked. Maître Mathias, incapable of disguising the truth, made reply:

"Madame, the entail being an inheritance derived from both fortunes, if the wife should be the first to die, and leaves one or several children, one of them a boy, Monsieur le

Comte de Manerville will account to them for no more than three hundred and fifty-six thousand francs, from which he will deduct his one absolute fourth, and the fourth part of the interest of the residue. Thus their claim on him is reduced to about a hundred and sixty thousand francs independently of his share of profits on the common stock, the sums he could claim, etc. In the contrary case, if he should die first, leaving a son or sons, Madame de Manerville would be entitled to no more than three hundred and fifty-six thousand francs, to her share of all of Monsieur de Manerville's estate that is not included in the entail, to the restitution of her diamonds, and her portion of the common stock."

The results of Maître Mathias' profound policy were now amply evident.

"My daughter is ruined," said Madame Evangelista in a low voice.

The lawyers both heard her exclamation.

"Is it ruin," said Maître Mathias in an undertone, "to establish an indestructible fortune for her family in the future?"

As he saw the expression of his client's face, the younger notary thought it necessary to state the sum of the disaster in figures.

"We wanted to get three hundred thousand francs out of them, and they have evidently succeeded in getting eight hundred thousand out of us; the balance to their advantage on the contract is a loss of four hundred thousand francs to us for the benefit of the children.—We must break it off or go on," he added to Madame Evangelista.

No words could describe the silence, though brief, that ensued. Mathias triumphantly awaited the signature of the two persons who had hoped to plunder his client. Natalie, incapable of understanding that she was bereft of half of her fortune, and Paul, not knowing that the house of Manerville was acquiring it, sat laughing and talking as before. Solonet and Madame Evangelista looked at each other, he concealing his indifference, she disguising a myriad angry feelings.

After suffering from terrible remorse, and regarding Paul as the cause of her dishonesty, the widow had made up her mind to certain discreditable manœuvres to cast the blunders of her guardianship on his shoulders, making him her victim. And now, in an instant, she had discovered that, instead of triumphing, she was overthrown, and that the real victim was her daughter. Thus guilty to no purpose, she was the dupe of an honest old man, whose esteem she had doubtless sacrificed. Was it not her own secret conduct that had inspired the stipulations insisted on by Mathias?

Hideous thought! Mathias had, doubtless, told Paul.

If he had not yet spoken, as soon as the contract should be signed that old wolf would warn his client of the dangers he had run and escaped, if it were only to gather the praises to which everybody is open. Would he not put him on his guard against a woman so astute as to have joined such an ignoble conspiracy? Would he not undermine the influence she had acquired over her son-in-law? And weak natures, once warned, turn obstinate, and never reconsider the circumstances.

So all was lost!

On the day when the discussion was opened, she had trusted to Paul's feebleness and the impossibility of his retreating after advancing so far. And now it was she who had tied her own hands. Paul, three months since, would not have had many obstacles to surmount to break off the marriage; now, all Bordeaux knew that the lawyers had, two months ago, smoothed away every difficulty. The banns were published; the wedding was fixed for the next day but one. The friends of both families, all the town were arriving, dressed for the ball—how could she announce a postponement? The cause of the rupture would become known, the unblemished honesty of Maître Mathias would gain credence, his story would be believed in preference to hers. The laugh would be against the Evangelistas, of whom so many were envious. She must yield!

These painfully accurate reflections fell on Madame Evan-

gelista like a waterspout and crushed her brain. Though she maintained a diplomatic impassibility, her chin showed the nervous jerking by which Catherine II. betrayed her fury one day when, sitting on her throne and surrounded by her Court, she was defied by the young King of Sweden under almost similar circumstances. Solonet noted the spasmodic movement of the muscles that proclaimed a mortal hatred, a storm without a sound or a lightning-flash; and, in fact, at that moment, the widow had sworn such hatred of her son-in-law, such an implacable feud as the Arabs have left the germs of in the atmosphere of Spain.

"Monsieur," said she to her notary, "you called this a rigmarole—it seems to me that nothing can be clearer."

"Madame, allow me——"

"Monsieur," she went on, without listening to Solonet, "if you did not understand the upshot of this bargain at the time of our former discussion, it is at least extraordinary that you should not have perceived it in the retirement of your study. It cannot be from incapacity."

The young man led her into the adjoining room, saying to himself:

"More than a thousand crowns are due to me for the schedule of accounts, and a thousand more for the contract; six thousand francs I can make over the sale of the house—fifteen thousand francs in all.—We must keep our temper."

He shut the door, gave Madame Evangelista the cold look of a man of business, guessing the feelings that agitated her, and said:

"Madame, how, when I have perhaps overstepped in your behalf the due limits of finesse, can you repay my devotion by such a speech?"

"But, monsieur——"

"Madame, I did not, it is true, fully estimate the amount of our surrender; but if you do not care to have Count Paul for your son-in-law, are you obliged to agree? The contract is not signed.—Give your ball and postpone the signing. It

is better to take in all Bordeaux than to be taken in yourself."

"And what excuse can I make to all the world—already prejudiced against us—to account for this delay?"

"A blunder in Paris, a document missing," said Solonet.

"But the land that has been purchased?"

"Monsieur de Manerville will find plenty of matches with money."

"He! Oh, he will lose nothing; we are losing everything on our side."

"You," said Solonet, "may have a Count, a better bargain, if the title is the great point of this match in your eyes."

"No, no; we cannot throw our honor overboard in that fashion! I am caught in the trap, monsieur. All Bordeaux would ring with it to-morrow. We have solemnly pledged ourselves."

"You wish Mademoiselle Natalie to be happy?" asked Solonet.

"That is the chief thing."

"In France," said the lawyer "does not being happy mean being mistress of the hearth? She will lead that nincompoop Manerville by the nose. He is so stupid that he has seen nothing. Even if he should distrust you, he will still believe in his wife. And are not you and his wife one? Count Paul's fate still lies in your hands."

"If you should be speaking truly, I do not know what I could refuse you!" she exclaimed, with delight that glowed in her eyes.

"Come in again, then, madame," said Solonet, understanding his client. "But, above all, listen to what I say; you may regard me as incapable afterwards if you please."

"My dear friend," said the young lawyer to Mathias, as he re-entered the room, "for all your skill you have failed to foresee the contingency of Monsieur de Manerville's death without issue, or, again, that of his leaving none but daughters. In either of those cases the entail would give rise

to lawsuits with other Manervilles, for plenty would crop up, do not doubt it for a moment. It strikes me, therefore, as desirable to stipulate that in the former case the entailed property should be included in the general estate settled by each on either, and in the second that the entail should be cancelled as null and void. It is an agreement solely affecting the intending wife."

"The clause seems to me perfectly fair," said Mathias, "As to its ratification, Monsieur le Comte will make the necessary arrangements with the Court of Chancery, no doubt, if requisite."

The younger notary took a pen and wrote in on the margin this ominous clause, to which Paul and Natalie paid no attention. Madame Evangelista sat with downcast eyes while it was read by Maître Mathias.

"Now to sign," said the mother.

The strong voice which she controlled betrayed vehement excitement. She had just said to herself:

"No, my daughter shall not be ruined—but he shall! My daughter shall have his name, title, and fortune. If Natalie should ever discover that she does not love her husband, if some day she should love another man more passionately—Paul will be exiled from France, and my daughter will be free, happy, and rich."

Though Maître Mathias was expert in the analysis of interests, he had no skill in analyzing human passions. He accepted the lady's speech as an honorable surrender, instead of seeing that it was a declaration of war. While Solonet and his clerk took care that Natalie signed in full at the foot of every document—a business that required some time—Mathias took Paul aside and explained to him the bearing of the clauses which he had introduced to save him from inevitable ruin.

"You have a mortgage on this house for a hundred and fifty thousand francs," he said in conclusion, "and we foreclose to-morrow. I have at my office the securities in the funds, which I have taken care to place in your wife's name.

Everything is quite regular.—But the contract includes a receipt for the sum represented by the diamonds; ask for them. Business is business. Diamonds are just now going up in the market; they may go down again. Your purchase of the lands of Auzac and Saint-Froult justifies you in turning everything into money so as not to touch your wife's income. So, no false pride, Monsieur le Comte. The first payment is to be made after the formalities are concluded; use the diamonds for that purpose; it amounts to two hundred thousand francs. You will have the mortgage value of this house for the second call, and the income on the entailed property will help you to pay off the remainder. If only you are firm enough to spend no more than fifty thousand francs for the first three years, you will recoup the two hundred thousand francs you now owe. If you plant vines on the hill slopes of Saint-Froult, you may raise the returns to twenty-six thousand francs. Thus the entailed property, without including your house in Paris, will some day be worth fifty thousand francs a year—one of the finest estates I know of.—And so you will have married very handsomely."

Paul pressed his old friend's hands with warm affection. The gesture did not escape Madame Evangelista, who came to hand the pen to Paul. Her suspicion was now certainty; she was convinced that Paul and Mathias had an understanding. Surges of blood, hot with rage and hatred, choked her heart. Paul was warned!

After ascertaining that every clause was duly signed, that the three contracting parties had initialed the bottom of every page with their usual sign-manual, Maître Mathias looked first at his client and then at Madame Evangelista, and observing that Paul did not ask for the diamonds, he said:

"I suppose there will be no question as to the delivery of the diamonds now that you are but one family?"

"It would, no doubt, be in order that Madame Evangelista should surrender them. Monsieur de Manerville has given his discharge for the balance of the trust values, and no one

can tell who may die or live," said Maître Solonet, who thought this an opportunity for inciting his client against her son-in-law.

"Oh, my dear mother, it would be an affront to us if you did so!" cried Paul. *"Summum jus, summa injuria,* monsieur," said he to Solonet.

"And I, on my part," said she, her hostile temper regarding Mathias' indirect demand as an insult, "if you do not accept the jewels, will tear up the contract."

She went out of the room in one of those bloodthirsty furies which so long for the chance of wrecking everything, and which, when that is impossible, rise to the pitch of frenzy.

"In Heaven's name, take them," whispered Natalie. "My mother is angry; I will find out why this evening, and will tell you; we will pacify her."

Madame Evangelista, quite pleased at this first stroke of policy, kept on her necklace and earrings. She brought the rest of the jewels, valued by Élie Magus at a hundred and fifty thousand francs. Maître Mathias and Solonet, though accustomed to handling family diamonds, exclaimed at the beauty of these jewels as they examined the contents of the cases.

"You will lose nothing of mademoiselle's fortune, Monsieur le Comte," said Solonet, and Paul reddened.

"Ay," said Mathias, "these jewels will certainly pay the first instalment of the newly purchased land."

"And the expenses of the contract," said Solonet.

Hatred, like love, is fed on the merest trifles. Everything adds to it. Just as the one we love can do no wrong, the one we hate can do nothing right. Madame Evangelista scorned the hesitancy to which a natural reluctance gave rise in Paul as affected airs; while he, not knowing what to do with the jewel-cases, would have been glad to throw them out of the window. Madame Evangelista, seeing his embarrassment, fixed her eyes on him in a way which seemed to say, "Take them out of my sight!"

"My dear Natalie," said Paul to his fiancée, "put the

jewels away yourself; they are yours; I make them a present to you."

Natalie put them into the drawers of a cabinet. At this instant the clatter of carriages and the voices of the guests waiting in the adjoining rooms required Natalie and her mother to appear among them. The rooms were immediately filled, and the ball began.

"Take advantage of the honeymoon to sell your diamonds," said the old notary to Paul, as he withdrew.

While waiting for the dancing to begin, everybody was discussing the marriage in lowered tones, some of the company expressing doubts as to the future prospects of the engaged couple.

"Is it quite settled?" said one of the magnates of the town to Madame Evangelista.

"We have had so many papers to read and hear read, that we are late; but we may be excused," replied she.

"For my part, I heard nothing," said Natalie, taking Paul's hand to open the ball.

"Both those young people like extravagance, and it will not be the mother that will check them," said a dowager.

"But they have created an entail, I hear, of fifty thousand francs a year."

"Pooh!"

"I see that our good Maître Mathias has had a finger in the pie. And certainly, if that is the case, the worthy man will have done his best to save the future fortunes of the family."

"Natalie is too handsome not to be a desperate flirt. By the time that she has been married two years, I will not answer for it that Manerville will not be miserable in his home," remarked a young wife.

"What, the peas will be stuck you think?" replied Maître Solonet.

"He needed no more than that tall stick," said a young lady.

"Does it not strike you that Madame Evangelista is not best pleased?"

"Well, my dear, I have just been told that she has hardly twenty-five thousand francs a year, and what is that for her?"

"Beggary, my dear."

"Yes, she has stripped herself for her daughter. Monsieur has been exacting——"

"Beyond conception!" said Solonet. "But he is to be a peer of France. The Maulincours and the Vidame de Pamiers will help him on; he belongs to the Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"Oh, he visits there, that is all," said a lady, who had wanted him for her son-in-law. "Mademoiselle Evangelista, a merchant's daughter, will certainly not open the doors of the Chapter of Cologne to him."

"She is grand-niece to the Duc de Casa-Real."

"On the female side!"

All this tittle-tattle was soon exhausted. The gamblers sat down to cards, the young people danced, supper was served, and the turmoil of festivity was not silenced till morning, when the first streaks of dawn shone pale through the windows.

After taking leave of Paul, who was the last to leave, Madame Evangelista went up to her daughter's room, for her own had been demolished by the builder to enlarge the ball-room. Though Natalie and her mother were dying for sleep, they spoke a few words.

"Tell me, darling mother, what is the matter?"

"My dear, I discovered this evening how far a mother's love may carry her. You know nothing of affairs, and you have no idea to what suspicions my honesty lies exposed. However, I have trodden my pride underfoot; your happiness and our honor was at stake."

"As concerned the diamonds, you mean?—He wept over it, poor boy! He would not take them; I have them."

"Well, go to sleep, dearest child. We will talk business

when we wake; for we have business—and now there is a third to come between us," and she sighed.

"Indeed, dear mother, Paul will never stand in the way of our happiness," said Natalie, and she went to sleep.

"Poor child, she does not know that the man has ruined her!"

Madame Evangelista was now seized in the grip of the first promptings of that avarice to which old folks at last fall a prey. She was determined to replace, for her daughter's benefit, the whole of the fortune left by her husband. She regarded her honor as pledged to this restitution. Her affection for Natalie made her in an instant as close a calculator in money matters as she had hitherto been a reckless spendthrift. She proposed to invest her capital in land after placing part of it in the State funds, purchasable at that time for about eighty francs.

A passion not unfrequently produces a complete change of character; the tattler turns diplomatic, the coward is suddenly brave. Hatred made the prodigal Madame Evangelista turn parsimonious. Money might help her in the schemes of revenge, as yet vague and ill-defined, which she proposed to elaborate. She went to sleep, saying to herself:

"To-morrow!" And by an unexplained phenomenon, of which the effects are well known to philosophers, her brain during sleep worked out her idea, threw light on her plans, organized them, and hit on a way of ruling over Paul's life, devising a scheme which she began to work out on the very next day.

Though the excitement of the evening had driven away certain anxious thoughts which had now and again invaded Paul, when he was alone once more and in bed they returned to torment him.

"It would seem," said he to himself, "that, but for that worthy Mathias, my mother-in-law would have taken me in. Is it credible? What interest could she have had in cheating me? Are we not to unite our incomes and live together!—After all, what is there to be anxious about? In few days Natalie

will be my wife, our interests are clearly defined, nothing can sever us. On we go!—At the same time, I will be on my guard. If Mathias should prove to be right—well, I am not obliged to marry my mother-in-law."

In this second contest, Paul's future prospects had been entirely altered without his being aware of it. Of the two women he was marrying, far the cleverer had become his mortal enemy, and was bent on separating her own interests from his. Being incapable of appreciating the difference that the fact of her Creole birth made between his mother-in-law's character and that of other women, he was still less able to measure her immense cleverness.

The Creole woman is a being apart, deriving her intellect from Europe, and from the Tropics her vehemently illogical passions, while she is Indian in the apathetic indifference with which she accepts good or evil as it comes; a gracious nature too, but dangerous, as a child is when it is not kept in order. Like a child, this woman must have everything she wishes for, and at once; like a child, she would set a house on fire to boil an egg. In her flaccid everyday mood she thinks of nothing; when she is in a passion she thinks of everything. There is in her nature some touch of the perfidy caught from the negroes among whom she has lived from the cradle, but she is artless too, as they are. Like them, and like children, she can wish persistently for one thing with ever-growing intensity of desire, and brood over an idea till it hatches out. It is a nature strangely compounded of good and evil qualities; and in Madame Evangelista it was strengthened by the Spanish temper, over which French manners had laid the polish of their veneer.

This nature, which had lain dormant in happiness for sixteen years, and had since found occupation in the frivolities of fashion, had discovered its own force under the first impulse of hatred, and flared up like a conflagration; it had broken out at a stage in her life when a woman, bereft of what is dearest to her, craves some new material to feed the energies that are consuming her.

For three days longer Natalie would remain under her mother's influence. So Madame Evangelista, though vanquished, had still a day before her, the last her child would spend with her mother. By a single word the Creole might color the lives of these two beings whose fate it was to walk hand in hand through the thickets and highways of Paris society—for Natalie had a blind belief in her mother. What far-reaching importance would a hint of advice have on a mind thus prepared! The whole future might be modified by a sentence. No code, no human constitution can forefend the moral crime of killing by a word. That is the weak point of social forms of justice. That is where the difference lies between the world of fashion and the people; these are outspoken, those are hypocrites; these snatch the knife, those use the poison of words and suggestions; these are punished with death, those sin with impunity.

At about noon next day, Madame Evangelista was half sitting, half reclining on Natalie's bed. At this waking hour they were playing and petting each other with fond caresses, recalling the happy memories of their life together, during which no discord had troubled the harmony of their feelings, the agreement of their ideas, or the perfect union of their pleasures.

"Poor dear child," said the mother, shedding genuine tears, "I cannot bear to think that, after having had your own way all your life, to-morrow evening you will be bound to a man whom you must obey!"

"Oh, my dear mother, as to obeying him!" said Natalie, with a little wilful nod expressive of pretty rebellion. "You laugh!" she went on, "but my father always indulged your fancies. And why? Because he loved you. Shall not I be loved?"

"Yes, Paul is in love with you. But if a married woman is not careful, nothing evaporates so quickly as conjugal affection. The influence a wife may preserve over her husband depends on the first steps in married life, and you will want good advice."

"But you will be with us."

"Perhaps, my dear child.—Last evening, during the ball, I very seriously considered the risks of our being together. If my presence were to be disadvantageous to you, if the little details by which you must gradually confirm your authority as a wife should be ascribed to my influence, your home would become a hell. At the first frown on your husband's brow, should not I, so proud as I am, instantly quit the house? If I am to leave it sooner or later, in my opinion, I had better never enter it. I could not forgive your husband if he disunited us.

"On the other hand, when you are the mistress, when your husband is to you what your father was to me, there will be less fear of any such misfortune. Although such a policy must be painful to a heart so young and tender as yours, it is indispensable for your happiness that you should be the absolute sovereign of your home."

"Why, then, dear mother, did you say I was to obey him?"

"Dear little girl, to enable a woman to command, she must seem always to do what her husband wishes. If you did not know that, you might wreck your future life by an untimely rebellion. Paul is a weak man; he might come under the influence of a friend, nay, he might fall under the control of a woman, and you would feel the effects of their influence. Forefend such misfortunes by being mistress yourself. Will it not be better that you should govern him than that any one else should?"

"No doubt," said Natalie. "I could only aim at his happiness."

"And it certainly is my part, dear child, to think only of yours, and to endeavor that, in so serious a matter, you should not find yourself without a compass in the midst of the shoals you must navigate."

"But, my darling mother, are we not both of us firm enough to remain together under his roof without provoking the frowns you seem so much to dread? Paul is fond of you, mamma."

"Oh, he fears me more than he loves me. Watch him narrowly to-day when I tell him I shall leave you to go to Paris without me, and, however carefully he may try to conceal his feelings, you will see his secret satisfaction in his face."

"But why?" said Natalie.

"Why, my child? I am like Saint John Chrysostom—I will tell him why, and before you."

"But since I am marrying him on the express condition that you and I are not to part?" said Natalie.

"Our separation has become necessary," Madame Evangelista replied. "Several considerations affect my future prospects. I am very poor. You will have a splendid life in Paris; I could not live with you suitably without exhausting the little possessions that remain to me; whereas, by living at Lanstrac, I can take care of your interests and reconstitute my own fortune by economy."

"You, mother! you economize?" cried Natalie, laughing. "Come, do not be a grandmother yet.—What, would you part from me for such a reason as that?—Dear mother, Paul may seem to you just a little stupid, but at least he is perfectly disinterested——"

"Well," replied Madame Evangelista, in a tone big with comment, which made Natalie's heart beat, "the discussion of the contract had made me suspicious and suggested some doubts to my mind.—But do not be uneasy, dearest child," she went on, putting her arm round the girl's neck and clasping her closely, "I will not leave you alone for long. When my return to you can give him no umbrage, when Paul has learned to judge me truly, we will go back to our snug little life again, our evening chats——"

"Why, mother, can you live without your Ninie?"

"Yes, my darling, because I shall be living for you. Will not my motherly heart be constantly rejoiced by the idea that I am contributing, as I ought, to your fortune and your husband's?"

"But, my dear, adorable mother, am I to be alone there

with Paul? At once?—Quite alone?—What will become of me? What will happen? What ought I to do—or not to do?"

"Poor child, do you think I mean to desert you forthwith at the first battle? We will write to each other three times a week, like two lovers, and thus we shall always live in each other's heart. Nothing can happen to you that I shall not know, and I will protect you against all evil.—And besides, it would be too ridiculous that I should not go to visit you; that would cast a reflection on your husband; I shall always spend a month or two with you in Paris——"

"Alone—alone with him, and at once!" cried Natalie in terror, interrupting her mother.

"Are you not to be his wife?"

"Yes, and I am quite content; but tell me at least how to behave.—You, who did what you would with my father, know all about it, and I will obey you blindly."

Madame Evangelista kissed her daughter's forehead; she had been hoping and waiting for this request.

"My child, my advice must be adapted to the circumstances. Men are not all alike. The lion and the frog are less dissimilar than one man as compared with another, morally speaking. Do I know what will happen to you to-morrow? I can only give you general instructions as to your general plan of conduct."

"Dearest mother, tell me at once all you know."

"In the first place, my dear child, the cause of ruin to married women who would gladly retain their husband's heart—and," she added, as a parenthesis, "to retain their affection and to rule the man are one and the same thing,—well, the chief cause of matrimonial differences lies in the unbroken companionship, which did not subsist in former days, and which was introduced into this country with the mania for family life. Ever since the Revolution vulgar notions have invaded aristocratic households. This misfortune is attributable to one of their writers, Rousseau, a base heretic, who had none but reactionary ideas, and who—how I know not—

argued out the most irrational conclusions. He asserted that all women have the same rights and the same faculties; that under the conditions of social life the laws of Nature must be obeyed—as if the wife of a Spanish Grandee—as if you or I—had anything in common with a woman of the people. And since then women of rank have nursed their own children, have brought up their daughters, and lived at home.

"Life has thus been made so complicated that happiness is almost impossible; for such an agreement of two characters as has enabled you and me to live together as friends is a rare exception. And perpetual friction is not less to be avoided between parents and children than between husband and wife. There are few natures in which love can survive in spite of omnipresence; that miracle is the prerogative of God.

"So, place the barriers of society between you and Paul; go to balls, to the opera, drive out in the morning, dine out in the evening, pay visits; do not give Paul more than a few minutes of your time. By this system you will never lose your value in his eyes. When two beings have nothing but sentiment to go through life on, they soon exhaust its resources, and ere long satiety and disgust ensue. Then, when once the sentiment is blighted, what is to be done? Make no mistake; when love is extinct, only indifference or contempt ever fills its place. So be always fresh and new to him. If he bores you—that may occur—at any rate, never bore him. To submit to boredom on occasion is one of the conditions of every form of power. You will have no occasion to vary your happiness either by thrift in money matters or the management of a household; hence, if you do not lead your husband to share your outside pleasures, if you do not amuse him, in short, you will sink into the most crushing lethargy. Then begins the spleen of love. But we always love those who amuse us or make us happy. To give and to receive happiness are two systems of wifely conduct between which a gulf lies."

"Dear mother, I am listening, but I do not understand."

"If you love Paul so blindly as to do everything he desires,

and if he makes you really happy, there is an end of it; you will never be the mistress, and the wisest precepts in the world will be of no use."

"That is rather clearer; but I learn the rule without knowing how to apply it," said Natalie, laughing. "Well, I have the theory, and practice will follow."

"My poor Ninie," said her mother, dropping a sincere tear as she thought of her daughter's marriage and pressed her to her heart, "events will strengthen your memory.—In short, my Natalie," said she after a pause, during which they sat clasped in a sympathetic embrace, "you will learn that each of us, as a woman, has her destiny, just as every man has his vocation. A woman is born to be a woman of fashion, the charming mistress of her house, just as a man is born to be a General or a poet. Your calling in life is to attract. And your education has fitted you for the world. In these days a woman ought to be brought up to grace a drawing-room, as of old she was brought up for the Gynecæum. You, child, were never made to be the mother of a family or a notable housekeeper.

"If you have children, I hope they will not come to spoil your figure as soon as you are married. Nothing can be more vulgar—and besides, it casts reflections on your husband's love for you. Well, if you have children two or three years hence, you will have nurses and tutors to bring them up. You must always be the great lady, representing the wealth and pleasures of the house; but only show your superiority in such things as flatter men's vanity, and hide any superiority you may acquire in serious matters."

"You frighten me, mamma!" cried Natalie. "How am I ever to remember all your instructions? How am I, heedless and childish as I know I am, to reckon on results and always reflect before acting?"

"My darling child, I am only telling you now what you would learn for yourself later, paying for experience by wretched mistakes, by misguided conduct, which would cause you many regrets and hamper your life."

"But how am I to begin?" asked Natalie artlessly.

"Instinct will guide you," said her mother. "What Paul feels for you at this moment is far more desire than love; for the love to which desire gives rise is hope, and that which follows its gratification is realization. There, my dear, lies your power, there is the heart of the question. What woman is not loved the day before marriage? Be still loved the day after, and you will be loved for life. Paul is weak; he will be easily formed by habit; if he yields once, he will yield always. A woman not yet won may insist on anything. Do not commit the folly I have seen in so many wives, who, not knowing the importance of the first hours of their sovereignty, waste them in folly, in aimless absurdities. Make use of the dominion given you by your husband's first passion to accustom him to obey you. And to break him in, choose the most unreasonable thing possible, so as to gauge the extent of your power by the extent of his concession. What merit would there be in making him agree to what is reasonable? Would that be obeying you? 'Always take a bull by the horns,' says a Castilian proverb. When once he sees the uselessness of his weapons and his strength, he is conquered. If your husband commits a folly for your sake, you will master him."

"Good Heavens! But why?"

"Because, my child, marriage is for life, and a husband is not like any other man. So never be so foolish as to give way in anything whatever. Always be strictly reserved in your speech and actions; you may even go to the point of coldness, for that may be modified at pleasure, while there is nothing beyond the most vehement expressions of love. A husband, my dear, is the only man to whom a woman must grant no license.

"And, after all, nothing is easier than to preserve your dignity. The simple words, 'Your wife must not, or cannot do this thing or that,' are the great talisman. A woman's whole life is wrapped up in 'I will not!—I cannot!'—'I cannot' is the irresistible appeal of weakness which succumbs,

weeps, and wins. 'I will not' is the last resort. It is the crowning effort of feminine strength; it should never be used but on great occasions. Success depends entirely on the way in which a woman uses these two words, works on them, and varies them.

"But there is a better method of rule than these, which sometimes involve a contest. I, my child, governed by faith. If your husband believes in you, you may do anything. To inspire him with this religion, you must convince him that you understand him. And do not think that this is such an easy matter. A woman can always prove that she loves a man, but it is more difficult to get him to confess that she has understood him. I must tell you everything, my child; for, to you, life with all its complications, a life in which two wills are to be reconciled and harmonized, will begin to-morrow. Do you realize the difficulty? The best way to bring two wills into agreement is to take care that there is but one in the house. People often say that a woman makes trouble for herself by this inversion of the parts; but, my dear, the wife is thus in a position to command events instead of submitting to them, and that single advantage counterbalances every possible disadvantage."

Natalie kissed her mother's hands, on which she left her tears of gratitude. Like all women in whom physical passion does not fire the passion of the soul, she suddenly took in all the bearings of this lofty feminine policy. Still, like spoilt children who will never admit that they are beaten even by the soundest reasoning, but who reiterate their obstinate demands, she returned to the charge with one of those personal arguments that are suggested by the logical rectitude of children.

"My dear mother, a few days ago you said so much about the necessary arrangements for Paul's fortune, which you alone could manage; why have you changed your views in thus leaving us to ourselves?"

"I did not then know the extent of my indebtedness to you, nor how much I owed," replied her mother, who would

not confess her secret. "Besides, in a year or two I can give you my answer.

"Now, Paul will be here directly. We must dress. Be as coaxing and sweet, you know, as you were that evening when we discussed that ill-starred contract, for to-day I am bent on saving a relic of the family, and on giving you a thing to which I am superstitiously attached."

"What is that?"

"The *Discreto*."

Paul appeared at about four o'clock. Though, when addressing his mother, he did his utmost to seem gracious, Madame Evangelista saw on his brow the clouds which his cogitations of the night and reflections on waking had gathered there.

"Mathias has told him," thought she, vowing that she would undo the old lawyer's work.

"My dear boy," she said, "you have left your diamonds in the cabinet drawer, and I honestly confess that I never want to see the things again which so nearly raised a storm between us. Besides, as Mathias remarked, they must be sold to provide for the first instalment of payment on the lands you have purchased."

"The diamonds are not mine," rejoined Paul. "I gave them to Natalie, so that when you see her wear them you may never more remember the trouble they have caused you."

Madame Evangelista took Paul's hand and pressed it cordially, while restraining a sentimental tear.

"Listen, my dear, good children," said she, looking at Natalie and Paul. "If this is so, I will propose to make a bargain with you. I am obliged to sell my pearl necklace and earrings. Yes, Paul; I will not invest a farthing in an annuity; I do not forget my duties to you. Well, I confess my weakness, but to sell the *Discreto* seems to me to portend disaster. To part with a diamond known to have belonged to Philip II., to have graced his royel hand—a historical gem

which the Duke of Alva played with for ten years on the hilt of his sword—no, it shall never be. Élie Magus valued my necklace and earrings at a hundred odd thousand francs; let us exchange them for the jewels I have handed over to you to cancel my debts to my daughter; you will gain a little, but what do I care; I am not grasping. And then, Paul, out of your savings you can have the pleasure of procuring a diadem or hairpins for Natalie, a diamond at a time. Instead of having one of those fancy sets, trinkets which are in fashion only among second-rate people, your wife will thus have magnificent stones that will give her real pleasure. If something must be sold, is it not better to get rid of these old-fashioned jewels, and keep the really fine things in the family?"

"But you, my dear mother?" said Paul.

"I," replied Madame Evangelista, "I want nothing now. No, I am going to be your farm-bailiff at Lanstrac. Would it not be sheer folly to go to Paris just when I have to wind up my affairs here? I am going to be avaricious for my grandchildren."

"Dear mother," said Paul, much touched, "ought I to accept this exchange without compensation?"

"Dear Heaven! are you not my nearest and dearest? Do you think that I shall find no happiness when I sit by my fire and say to myself, 'Natalie is gone in splendor to-night to the Duchesse de Berri's ball. When she sees herself with my diamond at her throat, my earrings in her ears, she will have those little pleasures of self-satisfaction which add so much to a woman's enjoyment, and make her gay and attractive.'—Nothing crushes a woman so much as the chafing of her vanity. I never saw a badly-dressed woman look amiable and pleasant. Be honest, Paul! we enjoy much more through the one we love than in any pleasure of our own."

"What on earth was Mathias driving at?" thought Paul. "Well, mother," said he, in a low voice, "I accept."

"I am quite overpowered," said Natalie.

Just now Solonet came in with good news for his client.

He had found two speculators of his acquaintance, builders, who were much tempted by the house, as the extent of the grounds afforded good building land.

"They are prepared to pay two hundred and fifty thousand francs," said he; "but if you are ready to sell, I could bring them up to three hundred thousand. You have two acres of garden."

"My husband paid two hundred thousand for the whole thing," said she, "so I agree; but you will not include the furniture or the mirrors."

"Ah, ha!" said Solonet, with a laugh, "you understand business."

"Alas! needs must," said she, with a sigh.

"I hear that a great many persons are coming to your midnight ceremony," said Solonet, who, finding himself in the way, bowed himself out.

Madame Evangelista went with him as far as the door of the outer drawing-room, and said to him privately:

"I have now property representing two hundred and fifty thousand francs; if I get two hundred thousand francs for myself out of the price of the house, I can command a capital of four hundred and fifty thousand francs. I want to invest it to the best advantage, and I trust to you to do it. I shall most likely remain at Lanstrac."

The young lawyer kissed his client's hand with a bow of gratitude, for the widow's tone led him to believe that this alliance, strengthened by interest, might even go a little further.

"You may depend on me," said he. "I will find you trade investments, in which you will risk nothing, and make large profits."

"Well—till to-morrow," said she; "for you and Monsieur le Marquis de Gyas are going to sign for us."

"Why, dear mother, do you refuse to come with us to Paris?" asked Paul. "Natalie is as much vexed with me as if I were the cause of your determination."

"I have thought it well over, my children, and I should

be in your way. You would think yourselves obliged to include me as a third in everything you might do, and young people have notions of their own which I might involuntarily oppose. Go to Paris by yourselves.—I do not propose to exercise over the Comtesse de Manerville the mild dominion I held over Natalie. I must leave her entirely to you. There are habits which she and I share, you see, Paul, and which must be broken. My influence must give way to yours. I wish you to be attached to me; believe me, I have your interests at heart more than you think perhaps. Young husbands, sooner or later, are jealous of a wife's affection for her mother. Perhaps they are right. When you are entirely united, when love has amalgamated your souls into one—then, my dear boy, you will have no fears of an adverse influence when you see me under your roof.

"I know the world, men and things; I have seen many a household rendered unhappy by the blind affection of a mother who made herself intolerable, as much to her daughter as to her son-in-law. The affection of old people is often petty and vexatious; perhaps I should not succeed in effacing myself. I am weak enough to think myself handsome still; some flatterers try to persuade me that I am lovable, and I might assume an inconvenient prominence. Let me make one more sacrifice to your happiness.—I have given you my fortune; well, now I surrender my last womanly vanities.—Your good father Mathias is growing old; he cannot look after your estates. I will constitute myself your bailiff. I shall make such occupation for myself as old folks must sooner or later fall back on; then, when you need me, I will go to Paris and help in your plans of ambition.

"Come, Paul, be honest; this arrangement is to your mind? Answer."

Paul would not admit it, but he was very glad to be free. The suspicions as to his mother-in-law's character, implanted in his mind by the old notary, were dispelled by this conversation, which Madame Evangelista continued to the same effect.

"My mother was right," thought Natalie, who was watch-

ing Paul's expression. "He is really glad to see me parted from her.—But why?"

Was not this *Why?* the first query of suspicion, and did it not add considerable weight to her mother's instructions?

There are some natures who, on the strength of a single proof, can believe in friendship. In such folks as these the north wind blows away clouds as fast as the west wind brings them up; they are content with effects, and do not look for the causes. Paul's was one of these essentially confiding characters, devoid of ill-feeling, and no less devoid of foresight. His weakness was the outcome of kindness and a belief in goodness in others, far more than of want of strength of mind.

Natalie was pensive and sad; she did not know how to do without her mother. Paul, with the sort of fatuity that love can produce, laughed at his bride's melancholy mood, promising himself that the pleasures of married life and the excitement of Paris would dissipate it. It was with marked satisfaction that Madame Evangelista encouraged Paul in his confidence, for the first condition of revenge is dissimulation. Overt hatred is powerless.

The Creole lady had made two long strides already. Her daughter had possession of splendid jewels which had cost Paul two hundred thousand francs, and to which he would, no doubt, add more. Then, she was leaving the two young people to themselves, with no guidance but unregulated love. Thus she had laid the foundations of revenge of which her daughter knew nothing, though sooner or later she would be accessory to it.

Now, would Natalie love Paul?—This was as yet an unanswered question, of which the issue would modify Madame Evangelista's schemes; for she was too sincerely fond of her daughter not to be tender of her happiness. Thus Paul's future life depended on himself. If he could make his wife love him, he would be saved.

Finally, on the following night, after an evening spent with the four witnesses whom Madame Evangelista had in-

vited to the lengthy dinner which followed the legal ceremony, at midnight the young couple and their frienrs attended mass by the light of blazing tapers in the presence of above a hundred curious spectators.

A wedding celebrated at night always seems of ill-omen; daylight is a symbol of life and enjoyment, and its happy augury is lacking. Ask the staunchest spirit the cause of this chill, why the dark vault depresses the nerves, why the sound of footsteps is so startling, why the cry of owls and bats is so strangely audible. Though there is no reason for alarm, every one quakes; darkness, the forecast of death, is crushing to the spirit.

Natalie, torn from her mother, was weeping. The girl was tormented by all the doubts which clutch the heart on the threshold of a new life, where, in spite of every promise of happiness, there are a thousand pitfalls for a woman's feet. She shivered with cold, and had to put on a cloak.

Madame Evangelista's manner and that of the young couple gave rise to comments among the elegant crowd that stood round the altar.

"Solonet tells me that the young people go off to Paris to-morrow morning alone."

"Madame Evangelista was to have gone to live with them."

"Count Paul has got rid of her!"

"What a mistake!" said the Marquise de Gyas. "The man who shuts his door on his mother-in-law opens it to a lover. Does he not know all that a mother is?"

"He has been very hard on Madame Evangelista. The poor woman has had to sell her house, and is going to live at Lanstrac."

"Natalie is very unhappy."

"Well, would you like to spend the day after your wedding on the highroad?"

"It is very uncomfortable."

"I am glad I came," said another lady, "to convince myself of the necessity of surrounding a wedding with all the usual ceremonies and festivities, for this seems to me very cold

and dismal. Indeed, if I were to tell the whole truth," she whispered, leaning over to her neighbor, "it strikes me as altogether unseemly."

Madame Evangelista took Natalie in her own carriage to Count Paul's house.

"Well, mother, it is all over——"

"Remember my advice, and you will be happy. Always be his wife, and not his mistress."

When Natalie had gone to her room, Madame Evangelista went through the little farce of throwing herself into her son-in-law's arms and weeping on his shoulder. It was the only provincial detail Madame Evangelista had allowed herself; but she had her reasons. In the midst of her apparently wild and desperate tears and speeches, she extracted from Paul such concessions as a husband will always make.

The next day she saw the young people into their chaise, and accompanied them across the ferry over the Gironde. Natalie, in a word, had made her mother understand that if Paul had won in the game concerning the contract, her revenge was beginning. Natalie had already reduced her husband to perfect obedience.

CONCLUSION

Five years after this, one afternoon in November, the Comte Paul de Manerville, wrapped in a cloak, with a bowed head, mysteriously arrived at the house of Monsieur Mathias at Bordeaux. The worthy man, too old now to attend to business, had sold his connection, and was peacefully ending his days in one of his houses.

Important business had taken him out at the time when his visitor called; but his old housekeeper, warned of Paul's advent, showed him into the room that had belonged to Madame Mathias, who had died a year since.

Paul, tired out by a hurried journey, slept till late. The

old man, on his return, came to look at his erewhile client, and was satisfied to look at him lying asleep, as a mother looks at her child. Josette, the housekeeper, came in with her master, and stood by the bedside, her hands on her hips.

"This day twelvemonth, Josette, when my dear wife breathed her last in this bed, I little thought of seeing Monsieur le Comte here looking like death."

"Poor gentleman! he groans in his sleep," said Josette.

The old lawyer made no reply but *"Sac à papier!"*—an innocent oath, which, from him, always represented the despair of a man of business in the face of some insuperable dilemma.

"At any rate," thought he, "I have saved the freehold of Lanstrac, Auzac, Saint-Froult, and his town house here."

Mathias counted on his fingers and exclaimed, "Five years! —Yes, it is five years this very month since his old aunt, now deceased, the venerable Madame de Maulincour, asked on his behalf for the hand of that little crocodile in woman's skirt's who has managed to ruin him—as I knew she would!"

After looking at the young man for some time, the good old man, now very gouty, went away, leaning on his stick, to walk slowly up and down his little garden. At nine o'clock supper was served, for the old man supped; and he was not a little surprised to see Paul come in with a calm brow and an unruffled expression, though perceptibly altered. Though at three-and-thirty the Comte de Manerville looked forty, the change was due solely to mental shocks; physically he was in good health. He went up to his old friend, took his hands, and pressed them affectionately, saying:

"Dear, good Maître Mathias! And you have had your troubles!"

"Mine were in the course of nature, Monsieur le Comte, but yours——"

"We will talk over mine presently at supper."

"If I had not a son high up in the law, and a married daughter," said the worthy man, "believe me, Monsieur le Comte, you would have found something more than bare

hospitality from old Mathias.—How is it that you have come to Bordeaux just at the time when you may read on every wall bills announcing the seizure and sale of the farms of le Grassol and le Guadet, of the vine land of Bellerose and your house here? I cannot possibly express my grief on seeing those huge posters—I, who for forty years took as much care of your estates as if they were my own; I, who, when I was third clerk under Monsieur Chesneau, my predecessor, transacted the purchase for your mother, and in my young clerk's hand engrossed the deed of sale on parchment; I, who have the title-deeds safe in my successor's office; I, who made out all the accounts. Why, I remember you so high——" and the old man held his hand two feet from the floor.

"After being a notary for more than forty years, to see my name printed as large as life in the face of Israel, in the announcement of the seizure and the disposal of the property —you cannot imagine the pain it gives me. As I go along the street and see the folks all reading those horrible yellow bills, I am as much ashamed as if my own ruin and honor were involved. And there are a pack of idiots who spell it all out at the top of their voices on purpose to attract idlers, and they add the most ridiculous comments.

"Are you not master of your own? Your father ran through two fortunes before making the one he left you, and you would not be a Manerville if you did not tread in his steps.

"And besides, the seizure of real property is foreseen in the Code, and provided for under a special *capitulum;* you are in a position recognized by law. If I were not a white-headed old man, only waiting for a nudge to push me into the grave, I would thrash the men who stand staring at such abominations—'At the suit of Madame Natalie Evangelista, wife of Paul François Joseph Comte de Manerville, of separate estate by the ruling of the lower Court of the Department of the Seine,' and so forth."

"Yes," said Paul, "and now separate in bed and board——"

"Indeed!" said the old man.

"Oh! against Natalie's will," said the Count quickly. "I had to deceive her. She does not know that I am going away."

"Going away?"

"My passage is taken; I sail on the *Belle-Amélie* for Calcutta."

"In two days!" said Mathias. "Then we meet no more, Monsieur le Comte."

"You are but seventy-three, my dear Mathias, and you have the gout, an assurance of old age. When I come back I shall find you just where you are. Your sound brain and heart will be as good as ever; you will help me to rebuild the ruined home. I mean to make a fine fortune in seven years. On my return I shall only be forty. At that age everything is still possible."

"You, Monsieur le Comte!" exclaimed Mathias, with a gesture of amazement. "You are going into trade!—What are you thinking of?"

"I am no longer Monsieur le Comte, dear Mathias. I have taken my passage in the name of Camille, a Christian name of my mother's. And I have some connections which may enable me to make a fortune in other ways. Trade will be my last resource. Also, I am starting with a large enough sum of money to allow of my tempting fortune on a grand scale."

"Where is that money?"

"A friend will send it to me."

The old man dropped his fork at the sound of the word *friend,* not out of irony or surprise; his face expressed his grief at finding Paul under the influence of a delusion, for his eye saw a void where the Count perceived a solid plank.

"I have been in a notary's office more than fifty years," said he, "and I never knew a ruined man who had friends willing to lend him money."

"You do not know de Marsay. At this minute, while I speak to you, I am perfectly certain that he has sold out of

the funds if it was necessary, and to-morrow you will receive a bill of exchange for fifty thousand crowns."

"I only hope so.—But then could not this friend have set your affairs straight? You could have lived quietly at Lanstrac for five or six years on Madame la Comtesse's income."

"And would an assignment have paid fifteen hundred thousand francs of debts, of which my wife's share was five hundred and fifty thousand?"

"And how, in four years, have you managed to owe fourteen hundred and fifty thousand francs?"

"Nothing can be plainer, my good friend. Did I not make the diamonds a present to my wife? Did I not spend the hundred and fifty thousand francs that came to us from the sale of Madame Evangelista's house in redecorating my house in Paris? Had I not to pay the price of the land we purchased, and of the legal business of my marriage contract? Finally, had I not to sell Natalie's forty thousand francs a year in the funds to pay for d'Auzac and Saint-Froult? We sold at 87, so I was in debt about two hundred thousand francs within a month of my marriage.

"An income was left of sixty-seven thousand francs, and we have regularly spent two hundred thousand francs a year beyond it. To these nine hundred thousand francs add certain money-lenders' interest, and you will easily find it a million."

"Brrrr," said the old lawyer. "And then?"

"Well, I wished at once to make up the set of jewels for my wife, of which she already had the pearl necklace and the *Discreto* clasp—a family jewel—and her mother's earrings. I paid a hundred thousand francs for a diadem of wheat-ears. There you see eleven hundred thousand francs. Then I owe my wife the whole of her fortune, amounting to three hundred and fifty-six thousand francs settled on her."

"But then," said Mathias, "if Madame la Comtesse had pledged her diamonds, and you your securities, you would have, by my calculations, three hundred thousand with which to pacify your creditors——"

"When a man is down, Mathias; when his estates are loaded with mortgages; when his wife is the first creditor for her settlement; when, to crown all, he is exposed to having writs against him for notes of hand to the tune of a hundred thousand francs—to be paid off, I hope, by good prices at the sales—nothing can be done. And the cost of conveyancing!"

"Frightful!" said the lawyer.

"The distraint has happily taken the form of a voluntary sale, which will mitigate the flare."

"And you are selling Bellerose with the wines of 1825 in the cellars?"

"I cannot help myself."

"Bellerose is worth six hundred thousand francs."

"Natalie will buy it in by my advice."

"Sixteen thousand francs in ordinary years—and such a season as 1825! I will run Bellerose up to seven hundred thousand francs myself, and each of the farms up to a hundred and twenty thousand."

"So much the better; then I can clear myself if my house in the town fetches two hundred thousand."

"Solonet will pay a little more for it; he has a fancy for it. He is retiring on a hundred odd thousand a year, which he has made in gambling in *trois-six*. He has sold his business for three hundred thousand francs, and is marrying a rich mulatto. God knows where she got her money, but they say she has millions. A notary gambling in *trois-six!* A notary marrying a mulatto! What times these are! It was he, they say, who looked after your mother-in-law's investments."

"She has greatly improved Lanstrac, and taken good care of the land; she has regularly paid her rent."

"I should never have believed her capable of behaving so."

"She is so kind and devoted.—She always paid Natalie's debts when she came to spend three months in Paris."

"So she very well might, she lives on Lanstrac," said Mathias. "She! Turned thrifty! What a miracle! She has just bought the estate of Grainrouge, lying between Lanstrac and Grassol, so that if she prolongs the avenue from Lanstrac

down to the highroad you can drive a league and a half through your own grounds. She paid a hundred thousand francs down for Grainrouge, which is worth a thousand crowns a year in cash rents."

"She is still handsome," said Paul. "Country life keeps her young. I will not go to take leave of her; she would bleed herself for me."

"You would waste your time; she is gone to Paris. She probably arrived just as you left."

"She has, of course, heard of the sale of the land, and has rushed to my assistance.—I have no right to complain of life. I am loved as well as any man can be in this world, loved by two women who vie with each other in their devotion to me. They were jealous of each other; the daughter reproached her mother for being too fond of me, and the mother found fault with her daughter for her extravagance. This affection has been my ruin. How can a man help gratifying the lightest wish of the woman he loves? How can he protect himself? And, on the other hand, how can he accept self-sacrifice?—We could, to be sure, pay up with my fortune and come to live at Lanstrac—but I would rather go to India and make my fortune than tear Natalie from the life she loves. It was I myself who proposed to her a separation of goods. Women are angels who ought never to be mixed up with the business of life."

Old Mathias listened to Paul with an expression of surprise and doubt.

"You have no children?" said he.

"Happily!" replied Paul.

"Well, I view marriage in a different light," replied the old notary quite simply. "In my opinion, a wife ought to share her husband's lot for good or ill. I have heard that young married people who are too much like lovers have no families. Is pleasure then the only end of marriage? Is it not rather the happiness of family life? Still, you were but eight-and-twenty, and the Countess no more than twenty; it was excusable that you should think only of love-making. At the same time, the terms of your marriage-contract, and your name—

you will think me grossly lawyer-like—required you to begin by having a fine handsome boy. Yes, Monsieur le Comte, and if you had daughters, you ought not to have stopped till you had a male heir to succeed you in the entail.

"Was Mademoiselle Evangelista delicate? Was there anything to fear for her in motherhood?—You will say that is very old-fashioned and antiquated; but in noble families, Monsieur le Comte, a legitimate wife ought to have children and bring them up well. As the Duchesse de Sully said—the wife of the great Sully—a wife is not a means of pleasure, but the honor and virtue of the household."

"You do not know what women are, my dear Mathias," said Paul. "To be happy, a man must love his wife as she chooses to be loved. And is it not rather brutal to deprive a woman so early of her charms and spoil her beauty before she has really enjoyed it?"

"If you had had a family, the mother would have checked the wife's dissipation; she would have stayed at home——"

"If you were in the right, my good friend," said Paul, with a frown, "I should be still more unhappy. Do not aggravate my misery by moralizing over my ruin; let me depart without any after bitterness."

Next day Mathias received a bill payable at sight for a hundred and fifty thousand francs, signed by de Marsay.

"You see," said Paul, "he does not write me a word. Henri's is the most perfectly imperfect, the most unconventionally noble nature I have ever met with. If you could but know how superior this man—who is still young—rises above feeling and interest, and what a great politician he is, you, like me, would be amazed to find what a warm heart he has."

Mathias tried to reason Paul out of his purpose, but it was irrevocable, and justified by so many practical reasons, that the old notary made no further attempt to detain his client.

Rarely enough does a vessel in cargo sail punctually to the day; but by an accident disastrous to Paul, the wind being favorable, the *Belle-Amélie* was to sail on the morrow. At the

moment of departure the landing-stage is always crowded with relations, friends, and idlers. Among these, as it happened, were several personally acquainted with Manerville. His ruin had made him as famous now as he had once been for his fortune, so there was a stir of curiosity. Every one had some remark to make.

The old man had escorted Paul to the wharf, and he must have suffered keenly as he heard some of the comments.

"Who would recognize in the man you see there with old Mathias the dandy who used to be called Pease-blossom, and who was the oracle of fashion here at Bordeaux five years since?"

"What, can that fat little man in an alpaca overcoat, looking like a coachman, be the Comte Paul de Manerville?"

"Yes, my dear, the man who married Mademoiselle Evangelista. There he is ruined, without a sou to his name, going to the Indies to look for the roc's egg."

"But how was he ruined? He was so rich!"

"Paris—women—the Bourse—gambling—display——"

"And besides," said another, "Manerville is a poor creature; he has no sense, as limp as papier-maché, allowing himself to be fleeced, and incapable of any decisive action. He was born to be ruined."

Paul shook his old friend's hand and took refuge on board. Mathias stood on the quay, looking at his old client, who leaned over the netting, defying the crowd with a look of scorn.

Just as the anchor was weighed, Paul saw that Mathias was signaling to him by waving his handkerchief. The old housekeeper had come in hot haste, and was standing by her master, who seemed greatly excited by some matter of importance. Paul persuaded the captain to wait a few minutes and send a boat to land, that he might know what the old lawyer wanted; he was signaling vigorously, evidently desiring him to disembark. Mathias, too infirm to go to the ship, gave two letters to one of the sailors who were in the boat.

"My good fellow," said the old notary, showing one of the

letters to the sailor, "this letter, mark it well, make no mistake—this packet has just been delivered by a messenger who has ridden from Paris in thirty-five hours. Explain this clearly to Monsieur le Comte, do not forget. It might make him change his plans."

"And we should have to land him?"

"Yes," said the lawyer rashly.

The sailor in most parts of the world is a creature apart, professing the deepest contempt for all land-lubbers. As to townsfolk, he cannot understand them; he knows nothing about them; he laughs them to scorn; he cheats them if he can without direct dishonesty. This one, as it happened, was a man of Lower Brittany, who saw worthy old Mathias' instructions in only one light.

"Just so," he muttered, as he took his oar, "land him again! The captain is to lose a passenger! If we listened to these land-lubbers, we should spend our lives in pulling them between the ship and shore. Is he afraid his son will take cold?"

So the sailor gave Paul the letters without any message. On recognizing his wife's writing and de Marsay's, Paul imagined all that either of them could have to say to him; and being determined not to risk being influenced by the offers that might be inspired by their regard, he put the letters in his pocket with apparent indifference.

"And that is the rubbish we are kept waiting for! What nonsense!" said the sailor to the captain in his broad Breton. "If the matter were as important as that old guy declared, would Monsieur le Comte drop the papers into his scuppers?"

Paul, lost in the dismal reflections that come over the strongest man in such circumstances, gave himself up to melancholy, while he waved his hand to his old friend, and bid farewell to France, watching the fast disappearing buildings of Bordeaux.

He presently sat down on a coil of rope, and there night found him, lost in meditation. Doubt came upon him as twilight fell; he gazed anxiously into the future; he could see nothing before him but perils and uncertainty, and wondered

whether his courage might not fail him. He felt some vague alarm as he thought of Natalie left to herself; he repented of his decision, regretting Paris and his past life.

Then he fell a victim to sea-sickness. Every one knows the miseries of this condition, and one of the worst features of its sufferings is the total effacement of will that accompanies it. An inexplicable incapacity loosens all the bonds of vitality at the core; the mind refuses to act, and everything is a matter of total indifference—a mother can forget her child, a lover his mistress; the strongest man becomes a mere inert mass. Paul was carried to his berth, where he remained for three days, alternately violently ill, and plied with grog by the sailors, thinking of nothing or sleeping; then he went through a sort of convalescence and recovered his ordinary health.

On the morning when, finding himself better, he went for a walk on deck to breathe the sea-air of a more southern climate, on putting his hands in his pockets he felt his letters. He at once took them out to read them, and began by Natalie's. In order that the Comtesse de Manerville's letter may be fully understood, it is necessary first to give that written by Paul to his wife on leaving Paris.

PAUL DE MANERVILLE TO HIS WIFE.

"My best Beloved,—When you read this letter I shall be far from you, probably on the vessel that is to carry me to India, where I am going to repair my shattered fortune. I did not feel that I had the courage to tell you of my departure. I have deceived you; but was it not necessary? You would have pinched yourself to no purpose, you would have wished to sacrifice your own fortune. Dear Natalie, feel no remorse; I shall know no repentance. When I return with millions, I will imitate your father; I will lay them at your feet as he laid his at your mother's, and will say, 'It is all yours.'

"I love you to distraction, Natalie; and I can say so without fearing that you will make my avowal a pretext for exerting a

power which only weak men dread. Yours was unlimited from the first day I ever saw you. My love alone has led me to disaster; my gradual ruin has brought me the delirious joys of the gambler. As my money diminished my happiness grew greater; each fraction of my wealth converted into some little gratification to you caused me heavenly rapture. I could have wished you to have more caprices than you ever had.

"I knew that I was marching on an abyss, but I went, my brow wreathed with joys and feelings unknown to vulgar souls. I acted like the lovers who shut themselves up for a year or two in a cottage by a lake, vowing to kill themselves after plunging into the ocean of happiness, dying in all the glory of their illusions and their passion. I have always thought such persons eminently rational. You have never known anything of my pleasures or of my sacrifices. And is there not exquisite enjoyment in concealing from the one we love the cost of the things she wishes for?

"I may tell you these secrets now. I shall be far indeed away when you hold this sheet loaded with my love. Though I forego the pleasure of your gratitude, I do not feel that clutch at my heart which would seize me if I tried to talk of these things. Alas, my dearest, there is deep self-interest in thus revealing the past. Is it not to add to the volume of our love in the future? Could it indeed ever need such a stimulus? Do we not feel that pure affection to which proof is needless, which scorns time and distance, and lives in its own strength?

"Ah! Natalie, I just now left the table where I am writing by the fire, and looked at you asleep, calm and trustful, in the attitude of a guileless child, your hand lying where I could take it. I left a tear on the pillow that has been the witness of our happiness. I leave you without a fear on the promise of that attitude; I leave you to win peace by winning a fortune so large that no anxiety may ever disturb our joys, and that you may satisfy your every wish. Neither you nor I could ever dispense with the luxuries of the life we lead. I am a man, and I have courage; mine alone be the task of amassing the fortune we require.

"You might perhaps think of following me! I will not tell you the name of the ship, nor the port I sail from, nor the day I leave. A friend will tell you when it is too late.

"Natalie, my devotion to you is boundless; I love you as a mother loves her child, as a lover worships his mistress, with perfect disinterestedness. The work be mine, the enjoyment yours; mine the sufferings, yours a life of happiness. Amuse yourself; keep up all your habits of luxury; go to the Italiens, to the French opera, into society and to balls; I absolve you beforehand. But, dear angel, each time you come home to the nest where we have enjoyed the fruits that have ripened during our five years of love, remember your lover, think of me for a moment, and sleep in my heart. That is all I ask.

"I—my one, dear, constant thought—when, under scorching skies, working for our future, I find some obstacle to overcome, or when, tired out, I rest in the hope of my return—I shall think of you who are the beauty of my life. Yes, I shall try to live in you, telling myself that you have neither cares nor uneasiness. Just as life is divided into day and night, waking and sleeping, so I shall have my life of enchantment in Paris, my life of labors in India—a dream of anguish, a reality of delight; I shall live so completely in what is real to you that my days will be the dream. I have my memories; canto by canto I shall recall the lovely poem of five years; I shall remember the days when you chose to be dazzling, when by some perfection of evening-dress or morning-wrapper you made yourself new in my eyes. I shall taste on my lips the flavor of our little feasts.

"Yes, dear angel, I am going like a man pledged to some high emprise when by success he is to win his mistress! To me the past will be like the dreams of desire which anticipate realization, and which realization often disappoints. But you have always more than fulfilled them. And I shall return to find a new wife, for will not absence lend you fresh charms?—Oh, my dear love, my Natalie, let me be a religion to you. Be always the child I have seen sleeping! If you were to betray my blind confidence—Natalie, you would not have to fear

my anger, of that you may be sure; I should die without a word. But a woman does not deceive the husband who leaves her free, for women are never mean. She may cheat a tyrant; but she does not care for the easy treason which would deal a deathblow. No, I cannot imagine such a thing—forgive me for this cry, natural to a man.

"My dearest, you will see de Marsay; he is now the tenant holding our house, and he will leave you in it. This lease to him was necessary to avoid useless loss. My creditors, not understanding that payment is merely a question of time, might have seized the furniture and the rent of letting the house. Be good to de Marsay; I have the most perfect confidence in his abilities and in his honor. Make him your advocate and your adviser, your familiar. Whatever his engagements may be, he will always be at your service. I have instructed him to keep an eye on the liquidation of my debts; if he should advance a sum of which he presently needed the use, I trust to you to pay him. Remember I am not leaving you to de Marsay's guidance, but to your own; when I mention him, I do not force him upon you.

"Alas, I cannot begin to write on business matters; only an hour remains to me under the same roof with you. I count your breathing; I try to picture your thoughts from the occasional changes in your sleep, your breathing revives the flowery hours of our early love. At every throb of your heart mine goes forth to you with all its wealth, and I scatter over you the petals of the roses of my soul, as children strew them in front of the altars on Corpus Christi Day. I commend you to the memories I am pouring out on you; I would, if I could, pour my life-blood into your veins that you might indeed be mine, that your heart might be my heart, your thoughts my thoughts, that I might be wholly in you!—And you utter a little murmur as if in reply!

"Be ever as calm and lovely as you are at this moment. I would I had the fabled power of which we hear in fairy tales, and could leave you thus to sleep during my absence, to wake you on my return with a kiss. What energy, what love, must

I feel to leave you when I behold you thus.—You are Spanish and religious; you will observe an oath taken even in your sleep when your unspoken word was believed in beyond doubt.

"Farewell, my dearest. Your hapless Pease-blossom is swept away by the storm-wind; but it will come back to you for ever on the wings of Fortune. Nay, dear Ninie, I will not say farewell, for you will always be with me. Will you not be the soul of my actions? Will not the hope of bringing you such happiness as cannot be wrecked give spirit to my enterprise and guide all my steps? Will you not always be present to me? No, it will not be the tropical sun, but the fire of your eyes, that will light me on my way.

"Be as happy as a woman can be, bereft of her lover.—I should have been glad to have a parting kiss, in which you were not merely passive; but, my Ninie, my adored darling, I would not wake you. When you wake, you will find a tear on your brow; let it be a talisman.—Think, oh think of him who is perhaps to die for you, far away from you; think of him less as your husband than as a lover who worships you and leaves you in God's keeping."

REPLY FROM THE COMTESSE DE MANERVILLE TO HER HUSBAND

"My Dearest,—What grief your letter has brought me! Had you any right to form a decision which concerns us equally without consulting me? Are you free? Do you not belong to me? And am I not half a Creole? Why should I not follow you?—You have shown me that I am no longer indispensable to you. What have I done, Paul, that you should rob me of my rights? What is to become of me alone in Paris? Poor dear, you assume the blame for any ill I may have done. But am I not partly to blame for this ruin? Has not my finery weighed heavily in the wrong scale? You are making me curse the happy, heedless life we have led these four years. To think of you as exiled for six years! Is it not enough to kill me? How can you make a fortune in six years? Will you ever come back? I was wiser than I knew when I so

strenuously opposed the separate maintenance which you and my mother so absolutely insisted on. What did I tell you? That it would expose you to discredit, that it would ruin your credit! You had to be quite angry before I would give in.

"My dear Paul, you have never been so noble in my eyes as you are at this moment. Without a hint of despair, to set out to make a fortune! Only such a character, such energy as yours could take such a step. I kneel at your feet. A man who confesses to weakness in such perfect good faith, who restores his fortune from the same motive that has led him to waste it—for love, for an irresistible passion—oh, Paul, such a man is sublime! Go without fear, trample down every obstacle, and never doubt your Natalie, for it would be doubting yourself. My poor dear, you say you want to live in me? And shall not I always live in you? I shall not be here, but with you wherever you may be.

"Though your letter brought me cruel anguish, it filled me too with joy; in one minute I went through both extremes; for, seeing how much you love me, I was proud too to find that my love was appreciated. Sometimes I have fancied that I loved you more than you loved me; now I confess myself outdone; you may add that delightful superiority to the others you possess; but have I not many more reasons for loving?—Your letter, the precious letter in which your whole soul is revealed, and which so plainly tells me that between you and me nothing is lost, will dwell on my heart during your absence, for your whole soul is in it; that letter is my glory!

"I am going to live with my mother at Lanstrac; I shall there be dead to the world, and shall save out of my income to pay off your debts. From this day forth, Paul, I am another woman; I take leave for ever of the world; I will not have a pleasure that you do not share.

"Besides, Paul, I am obliged to leave Paris and live in solitude. Dear boy, you have a twofold reason for making a fortune. If your courage needed a spur, you may now find another heart dwelling in your own. My dear, cannot you guess? We shall have a child. Your dearest hopes will be

crowned, monsieur. I would not give you the deceptive joys which are heart-breaking; we have already had so much disappointment on that score, and I was afraid of having to withdraw the glad announcement. But now I am sure of what I am saying, and happy to cast a gleam of joy over your sorrow. This morning, suspecting no evil, I had gone to the Church of the Assumption to return thanks to God. How could I foresee disaster? Everything seemed to smile on me. As I came out of church, I met my mother; she had heard of your distress, and had come by post with all her savings, thirty thousand francs, hoping to be able to arrange matters. What a heart, Paul! I was quite happy; I came home to tell you the two pieces of good news while we breakfasted under the awning in the conservatory, and I had ordered all the dainties you like best.

"Augustine gave me your letter.—A letter from you, when we had slept together! It was a tragedy in itself. I was seized with a shivering fit—then I read it—I read it in tears, and my mother too melted into tears. And a woman must love a man very much to cry over him, crying makes us so ugly.—I was half dead. So much love and so much courage! So much happiness and such great grief! To be unable to clasp you to my heart, my beloved, at the very moment when my admiration for your magnanimity most constrained me! What woman could withstand such a whirlwind of emotions? To think that you were far away when your hand on my heart would have comforted me; that you were not there to give me the look I love so well, to rejoice with me over the realization of our hopes;—and I was not with you to soften your sorrow by the affection which made your Natalie so dear to you, and which can make you forget every grief!

"I wanted to be off to fly at your feet; but my mother pointed out that the *Belle-Amélie* is to sail to-morrow, that only the post could go fast enough to overtake you, and that it would be the height of folly to risk all our future happiness on a jolt. Though a mother already, I ordered horses, and my mother cheated me into the belief that they would be

brought round. She acted wisely, for I was already unfit to move. I could not bear such a combination of violent agitations, and I fainted away. I am writing in bed, for I am ordered perfect rest for some months. Hitherto I have been a frivolous woman, now I mean to be the mother of a family. Providence is good to me, for a child to nurse and bring up can alone alleviate the sorrows of your absence. In it I shall find a second Paul to make much of. I shall thus publicly flaunt the love we have so carefully kept to ourselves. I shall tell the truth.

"My mother has already had occasion to contradict certain calumnies which are current as to your conduct. The two Vandenesses, Charles and Félix, had defended you stoutly, but your friend de Marsay makes game of everything; he laughs at your detractors instead of answering them. I do not like such levity in response to serious attacks. Are you not mistaken in him? However, I will obey and make a friend of him.

"Be quite easy, my dearest, with regard to anything that may affect your honor. Is it not mine?

"I am about to pledge my diamonds. My mother and I shall strain every resource to pay off your debts and try to buy in the vine land of Bellerose. My mother, who is as good a man of business as a regular accountant, blames you for not having been open with her. She would not then have purchased—thinking to give you pleasure—the estate of Grainrouge, which cut in on your lands; and then she could have lent you a hundred and thirty thousand francs. She is in despair at the step you have taken, and is afraid you will suffer from the life in India. She entreats you to be temperate, and not to be led astray by the women!—I laughed in her face. I am as sure of you as of myself. You will come back to me wealthy and faithful. I alone in the world know your womanly refinement and those secret feelings which make you an exquisite human flower, worthy of heaven. The Bordeaux folks had every reason to give you your pretty nickname. And who will take care of my delicate flower? My heart is

racked by dreadful ideas. I, his wife, his Natalie, am here, when already perhaps he is suffering! I, so entirely one with you, may not share your troubles, your annoyances, your dangers? In whom can you confide? How can you live without the ear into which you whisper everything? Dear, sensitive plant, swept away by the gale, why should you be transplanted from the only soil in which your fragrance could ever be developed! I feel as if I had been alone for two centuries, and I am cold in Paris! And I have cried so long——

"The cause of your ruin! What a text for the meditations of a woman full of love! You have treated me like a child, to whom nothing is refused that it asks for; like a courtesan, for whom a spendthrift throws away his fortune. Your delicacy, as you style it, is an insult. Do you suppose that I cannot live without fine clothes, balls, operas, successes? Am I such a frivolous woman? Do you think me incapable of a serious thought, of contributing to your fortune as much as I ever contributed to your pleasures? If you were not so far away and ill at ease, you would here find a good scolding for your impertinence. Can you disparage your wife to such an extent? Bless me! What did I go out into society for? To flatter your vanity; it was for you I dressed, and you know it. If I had been wrong, I should be too cruelly punished; your absence is a bitter expiation for our domestic happiness. That happiness was too complete; it could not fail to be paid for by some great sorrow; and here it is! After such delights, so carefully screened from the eyes of the curious; after these constant festivities, varied only by the secret madness of our affection, there is no alternative but solitude. Solitude, my dear one, feeds great passions, and I long for it. What can I do in the world of fashion; to whom should I report my triumphs?

"Ah, to live at Lanstrac, on the estate laid out by your father, in the house you restored so luxuriously—to live there with your child, waiting for you, and sending forth to you night and morning the prayers of the mother and child, of the woman and the angel—will not that be half happiness? Can-

not you see the little hands folded in mine? Will you still remember, as I shall remember every evening, the happiness of which your dear letter reminds me? Oh, yes, for we love each other equally. I no more doubt you than you doubt me.

"What consolations can I offer you here, I, who am left desolate, crushed; I, who look forward to the next six years as a desert to be crossed? Well, I am not the most to be pitied, for will not that desert be cheered by our little one? Yes—a boy—I must give you a boy, must I not? So farewell, dearly beloved one, our thoughts and our love will ever follow you. The tears on my paper will tell you much that I cannot express, and take the kisses you will find left here, below my name, by your own NATALIE."

This letter threw Paul into a day-dream, caused no less by the rapture into which he was thrown by these expressions of love than by the reminiscences of happiness thus intentionally called up; and he went over them all, one by one, to acount for this promise of a child.

The happier a man is, the greater are his fears. In souls that are exclusively tender—and a tender nature is generally a little weak—jealousy and disquietude are usually in direct proportion to happiness and to its greatness. Strong souls are neither jealous nor easily frightened: jealousy is doubt, and fear is small-minded. Belief without limits is the leading attribute of a high-minded man; if he is deceived—and strength as well as weakness may make him a dupe—his scorn serves him as a hatchet, and he cuts through everything. Such greatness is exceptional. Which of us has not known what it is to be deserted by the spirit that upholds this frail machine, and to hear only the unknown voice that denies everything?

Paul, caught as it were in the toils of certain undeniable facts, doubted and believed both at once. Lost in thought, a prey to terrible but involuntary questionings, and yet struggling with the proofs of true affection and his belief in Natalie, he read this discursive epistle through twice, unable

to come to any conclusion for or against his wife. Love may be as great in wordiness as in brevity of expression.

Thoroughly to understand Paul's frame of mind, he must be seen floating on the ocean as on the wide expanse of the past; looking back on his life as on a cloudless sky, and coming back at last after whirlwinds of doubt to the pure, entire, and untarnished faith of a believer, of a Christian, of a lover convinced by the voice of his heart.

It is now not less necessary to give the letter to which Henri de Marsay's was a reply.

LE COMTE PAUL DE MANERVILLE TO MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS HENRI DE MARSAY.

"HENRI,—I am going to tell you one of the greatest things a man can tell a friend: I am ruined. When you read this I shall be starting from Bordeaux for Calcutta on board the good ship *Belle-Amélie.* You will find in your notary's hands a deed which only needs your signature to ratify it, in which I let my house to you for six years on a hypothetical lease; you will write a letter counteracting it to my wife. I am obliged to take this precaution in order that Natalie may remain in her own house without any fear of being turned out of it. I also empower you to draw the income of the entailed property for four years, as against a sum of a hundred and fifty thousand francs that I will beg you to send by a bill, drawn on some house in Bordeaux, to the order of Mathias. My wife will give you her guarantee to enable you to draw the income. If the revenue from the entail should repay you sooner than I imagine, we can settle accounts on my return. The sum I ask of you is indispensable to enable me to set out to seek my fortune; and, if I am not mistaken in you, I shall receive it without delay at Bordeaux the day before I sail. I have acted exactly as you would have acted in my place. I have held out till the last moment without allowing any one to suspect my position. Then, when the news of the seizure of my salable estates reached Paris, I had raised money by

notes of hand to the sum of a hundred thousand francs, to try gambling. Some stroke of luck might reinstate me.—I lost.

"How did I ruin myself? Voluntarily, my dear Henri. From the very first day I saw that I could not go on in the way I started in; I knew what the consequence would be; I persisted in shutting my eyes, for I could not bear to say to my wife, 'Let us leave Paris and go to live at Lanstrac.' I have ruined myself for her, as a man ruins himself for a mistress, but knowing it.

"Between you and me, I am neither a simpleton nor weak. A simpleton does not allow himself to be governed, with his eyes open, by an absorbing passion; and a man who sets out to reconstitute his fortune in the Indies, instead of blowing his brains out, is a man of spirit. And so, my dear friend, as I care for wealth only for her sake, as I do not wish to be any man's dupe, and as I shall be absent six years, I place my wife in your keeping. You are enough the favorite of women to respect Natalie, and to give me the benefit of the honest friendship that binds us. I know of no better protector than you will be. I am leaving my wife childless; a lover would be a danger. You must know, my dear de Marsay, I love Natalie desperately, cringingly, and am not ashamed of it. I could, I believe, forgive her if she were unfaithful, not because I am certain that I could be revenged, if I were to die for it! but because I would kill myself to leave her happy if I myself could not make her happy.

"But what have I to fear? Natalie has for me that true regard, independent of love, which preserves love. I have treated her like a spoiled child. I found such perfect happiness in my sacrifices, one led so naturally to the other, that she would be a monster to betray me. Love deserves love.

"Alas! must I tell you the whole truth, my dear Henri? I have just written her a letter in which I have led her to believe that I am setting out full of hope, with a calm face; that I have not a doubt, no jealousy, no fears; such a letter as sons write to deceive a mother when they go forth to die.

Good God! de Marsay, I had hell within me, I am the most miserable man on earth. You must hear my cries, my gnashing of the teeth. To you I confess the tears of a despairing lover. Sooner would I sweep the gutter under her window for six years, if it were possible, than return with millions after six years' absence. I suffer the utmost anguish; I shall go on from sorrow to sorrow till you shall have written me a line to say that you accept a charge which you alone in the world can fulfil and carry out.

"My dear de Marsay, I cannot live without that woman; she is air and sunshine to me. Take her under your ægis, keep her faithful to me—even against her will. Yes, I can still be happy with such half-happiness. Be her protector; I have no fear of you. Show her how vulgar it would be to deceive me; that it would make her like every other woman; that the really brilliant thing will be to remain faithful.

"She must still have money enough to carry on her easy and undisturbed life; but if she should want anything, if she should have a whim, be her banker—do not be afraid, I shall come home rich.

"After all, my alarms are vain, no doubt; Natalie is an angel of virtue. When Félix de Vandenesse fell desperately in love with her and allowed himself to pay her some attentions, I only had to point out the danger to Natalie, and she thanked me so affectionately that I was moved to tears. She said that it would be awkward for her reputation if a man suddenly disappeared from her house, but that she would find means to dismiss him; and she did, in fact, receive him very coldly, so that everything ended well. In four years we have never had any other subject of discussion, if a conversation as between friends can be called a discussion.

"Well, my dear Henri, I must say good-bye like a man. The disaster has come. From whatever cause, there it is; I can but bow to it. Poverty and Natalie are two irreconcilable terms. And the balance of my debts and assets will be very nearly exact; no one will have anything to complain of. Still, in case some unforeseen circumstance should threaten my honor, I trust in you.

"Finally, if any serious event should occur, you can write to me under cover to the Governor-General at Calcutta. I have friends in his household, and some one will take charge of any letters for me that may arrive from Europe. My dear friend, I hope to find you still the same on my return—a man who can make fun of everything, and who is nevertheless alive to the feelings of others when they are in harmony with the noble nature you feel in yourself.

"You can stay in Paris! At the moment when you read this I shall be crying, 'To Carthage!' "

THE MARQUIS HENRI DE MARSAY IN REPLY TO THE COMTE PAUL DE MANERVILLE.

"And so, Monsieur le Comte, you have collapsed! Monsieur the Ambassador has turned turtle! Are these the fine things you were doing? Why, Paul, did you keep any secret from me? If you had said but one word, my dear old fellow, I could have thrown light on the matter.

"Your wife refuses her guarantee. That should be enough to unseal your eyes. And if not, I would have you to know that your notes of hand have been protested at the suit of one Lécuyer, formerly head-clerk to one Solonet, a notary at Bordeaux. This sucking money-lender, having come from Gascony to try his hand at stock-jobbing, lends his name to screen your very honorable mother-in-law, the real creditor to whom you owe the hundred thousand francs, for which, it is said, she gave you seventy thousand. Compared to Madame Evangelista, Daddy Gobseck is soft flannel, velvet, a soothing draught, a *meringue à la vanille,* a fifth-act uncle. Your vineyard of Bellerose will be your wife's booty; her mother is to pay her the difference between the price it sells for and the sum-total of her claims. Madame Evangelista is to acquire le Guadet and le Grassol, and the mortgages on your house at Bordeaux are all in her hands under the names of men of straw, found for her by that fellow Solonet. And in this way these two worthy women will secure an income of a hundred

and twenty thousand francs, the amount derivable from your estates, added to thirty odd thousand francs a year in the funds which the dear hussies have secured.

"Your wife's guarantee was unnecessary. The aforenamed Lécuyer came this morning to offer me repayment of the money I have sent you in exchange for a formal transfer of my claims. The vintage of 1825, which your mother-in-law has safe in the cellars at Lanstrac, is enough to pay me off. So the two women have calculated that you would be at sea by this time; but I am writing by special messenger that this may reach you in time for you to follow the advice I proceed to give you.

"I made this Lécuyer talk; and from his lies, his statements, and his concealments, I have culled the clues that I needed to reconstruct the whole web of domestic conspiracy that has been working against you. This evening at the Spanish Embassy I shall pay my admiring compliments to your wife and her mother. I shall be most attentive to Madame Evangelista, I shall throw you over in the meanest way, I shall abuse you, but with extreme subtlety; anything strong would at once put this Mascarille in petticoats on the scent. What did you do that set her against you? That is what I mean to find out. If only you had had wit enough to make love to the mother before marrying the daughter, you would at this moment be a peer of France, Duc de Manerville, and Ambassador to Madrid. If only you had sent for me at the time of your marriage! I could have taught you to know, to analyze, the two women you would have to fight, and by comparing our observations we should have hit on some good counsel. Was not I the only friend you had who would certainly honor your wife? Was I a man to be afraid of?—But after these women had learned to judge me, they took fright and divided us. If you had not been so silly as to sulk with me, they could not have eaten you out of house and home.

"Your wife contributed largely to our coolness. She was talked over by her mother, to whom she wrote twice a week, and you never heeded it. I recognized my friend Paul as I heard this detail.

"Within a month I will be on such terms with your mother-in-law that she herself will tell me the reason for the Hispano-Italian *vendetta* she has evidently vowed on you—you, the best fellow in the world. Did she hate you before her daughter was in love with Félix de Vandenesse? or has she driven you to the Indies that her daughter may be free, as a woman is in France when completely separated from her husband? That is the problem.

"I can see you leaping and howling when you read that your wife is madly in love with Félix de Vandenesse. If I had not taken it into my head to make a tour in the East with Montriveau, Ronquerolles, and certain other jolly fellows of your acquaintance, I could have told you more about this intrigue, which was incipient when I left. I could then see the first sprouting seed of your catastrophe. What gentleman could be scurvy enough to open such a subject without some invitation, or dare to blow on a woman? Who could bear to break the witch's mirror in which a friend loves to contemplate the fairy scenes of a happy marriage? Are not such illusions the wealth of the heart?—And was not your wife, my dear boy, in the widest sense of the word, a woman of the world? She thought of nothing but her success, her dress; she frequented the Bouffons, the Opera, and balls; rose late, drove in the Bois, dined out or gave dinner-parties. Such a life seems to me to women what war is to men; the public sees only the victorious, and forgets the dead. Some delicate women die of this exhausting round; those who survive must have iron constitutions, and consequently very little heart and very strong stomachs. Herein lies the reason of the want of feeling, the cold atmosphere of drawing-room society. Nobler souls dwell in solitude; the tender and weak succumb. What are left are the boulders which keep the social ocean within bounds by enduring to be beaten and rolled by the breakers without wearing out. Your wife was made to withstand this life; she seemed inured to it; she was always fresh and beautiful. To me the inference was obvious—she did not love you, while you loved her to distraction. To strike the

spark of love in this flinty nature a man of iron was required.

"After being caught by Lady Dudley, who could not keep him (she is the wife of my real father), Félix was obviously the man for Natalie. Nor was there any great difficulty in guessing that your wife did not care for you. From indifference to aversion is but a step; and, sooner or later, a discussion, a word, an act of authority on your part, a mere trifle, would make your wife overleap it.

"I myself could have rehearsed the scene that took place between you every night in her room. You have no child, no boy. Does not that fact account for many things to an observer? You, who were in love, could hardly discern the coldness natural to a young woman whom you have trained to the very point for Félix de Vandenesse. If you had discovered that your wife was cold-hearted, the stupid policy of married life would have prompted you to regard it as the reserve of innocence. Like all husbands, you fancied you could preserve her virtue in a world where women whisper to each other things that men dare not say, where all that a husband would never tell his wife is spoken and commented on behind a fan, with laughter and banter, à propos to a trial or an adventure. Though your wife liked the advantages of a married life, she found the price a little heavy; the price, the tax, was yourself!

"You, seeing none of these things, went on digging pits and covering them with flowers, to use the time-honored rhetorical figure. You calmly submitted to the rule which governs the common run of men, and from which I had wished to protect you.

"My dear boy, nothing was wanting to make you as great an ass as any tradesman who is surprised when his wife deceives him; nothing but this outcry to me about your sacrifices and your love for Natalie: 'How ungrateful she would be to betray me; I have done this and that and the other, and I will do more yet, I will go to India for her sake——' etc., etc.—My dear Paul, you have lived in Paris, and you have had the honor of the most intimate friendship of one Henri de Mar-

say, and you do not know the commonest things, the first principles of the working of the female mechanism, the alphabet of a woman's heart!—You may slave yourself to death, you may go to Sainte-Pélagie, you may kill two-and-twenty men, give up seven mistresses, serve Laban, cross the Desert, narrowly escape the hulks, cover yourself with disgrace; like Nelson, refuse to give battle because you must kiss Lady Hamilton's shoulder, or, like Bonaparte, fight old Wurmser, get yourself cut up on the Bridge of Arcole, rave like Rolando, break a leg in splints to dance with a woman for five minutes! —But, my dear boy, what has any of these things to do with her loving you? If love were taken as proven by such evidence, men would be too happy; a few such demonstrations at the moment when he wanted her would win the woman of his heart.

"Love, you stupid old Paul, is a belief like that in the immaculate conception of the Virgin. You have it, or you have it not. Of what avail are rivers of blood, or the mines of Potosi, or the greatest glory, to produce an involuntary and inexplicable feeling? Young men like you, who look for love to balance their outlay, seem to me base usurers. Our legal wives owe us children and virtue; but they do not owe love. Love is the consciousness of happiness given and received, and the certainty of giving and getting it; it is an ever-living attraction, constantly satisfied, and yet insatiable. On the day when Vandenesse stirred in your wife's heart the chord you had left untouched and virginal, your amorous flourishes, your outpouring of soul, and of money, ceased even to be remembered. Your nights of happiness strewn with roses—fudge! Your devotion—an offering of remorse. Yourself—a victim to be slain on the altar! Your previous life—a blank! One impulse of love annihilated your treasures of passion, which were now but old iron. He, Félix, has had her beauty, her devotion—for no return perhaps; but, in love, belief is as good as reality.

"Your mother-in-law was naturally on the side of the lover against the husband; secretly or confessedly she shut her eyes

—or she opened them; I do not know what she did, but she took her daughter's part against you. For fifteen years I have observed society, and I never knew a mother who, under such circumstances, deserted her daughter. Such indulgence is hereditary, from woman to woman. And what man can blame them? Some lawyer, perhaps, responsible for the Civil Code, which saw only formulas where feelings were at stake. —The extravagance into which you were dragged by the career of a fashionable wife, the tendencies of an easy nature, and your vanity too, perhaps, supplied her with the opportunity of getting rid of you by an ingenious scheme of ruin.

"From all this you will conclude, my good friend, that the charge you put upon me, and which I should have fulfilled all the more gloriously because it would have amused me, is, so to speak, null and void. The evil I was to have hindered is done —*consummatum est.*—Forgive me for writing *à la de Marsay,* as you say, on matters which to you are so serious. Far be it from me to cut capers on a friend's grave, as heirs do on that of an uncle. But you write to me that you mean henceforth to be a man, and I take you at your word; I treat you as a politician, and not as a lover.

"Has not this mishap been to you like the brand on his shoulder that determines a convict on a systematic antagonism to society, and a revolt against it? You are hereby released from one care—marriage was your master, now it is your servant. Paul, I am your friend in the fullest meaning of the word. If your brain had been bound in a circlet of brass, if you had earlier had the energy that has come to you too late, I could have proved my friendship by telling you things that would have enabled you to walk over human beings as on a carpet. But whenever we talked over the combinations to which I owed the faculty of amusing myself with a few friends in the heart of Parisian civilization, like a bull in a china shop; whenever I told you, under romantic disguises, some true adventure of my youth, you always regarded them as romances, and did not see their bearing. Hence, I could only think of you as a case of unrequited passion. Well,

on my word of honor, in the existing circumstances, you have played the nobler part, and you have lost nothing, as you might imagine, in my opinion. Though I admire a great scoundrel, I esteem and like those who are taken in.

"A propos to the doctor who came to such a bad end, brought to the scaffold by his love for his mistress, I remember telling you the far more beautiful story of the unhappy lawyer who is still living on the hulks, I know not where, branded as a forger because he wanted to give his wife—again, an adored wife—thirty thousand francs a year, and the wife gave him up to justice in order to get rid of him and live with another gentleman. You cried shame, you and some others too who were supping with us. Well, my dear fellow, you are that lawyer—minus the hulks.

"Your friends do not spare you the discredit which, in our sphere of life, is equivalent to a sentence pronounced by the Bench. The Marquise de Listomère, the sister of the two Vandenesses, and all her following, in which little Rastignac is now enlisted—a young rascal who is coming to the front; Madame d'Aiglemont and all her set, among whom Charles de Vandenesse is regnant; the Lenoncourts, the Comtesse Féraud, Madame d'Espard, the Nucingens, the Spanish Embassy; in short, a whole section of the fashionable world, very cleverly prompted, heap mud upon your name. 'You are a dissipated wretch, a gambler, a debauchee, and have made away with your money in the stupidest way. Your wife—an angel of virtue!—after paying your debts several times, has just paid off a hundred thousand francs to redeem bills you had drawn, though her fortune is apart from yours. Happily, you have pronounced sentence on yourself by getting out of the way. If you had gone on so, you would have reduced her to beggary, and she would have been a martyr to conjugal devotion!' When a man rises to power, he has as many virtues as will furnish an epitaph; if he falls into poverty, he has more vices than the prodigal son; you could never imagine how many vices *à la* Don Juan are attributed to you now. You gambled on the Bourse, you had licentious tastes,

which it cost you vast sums to indulge, and which are mentioned with comments and jests that mystify the women. You paid enormous interest to the money-lenders. The two Vandenesses laugh as they tell a story of Gigonnet's selling you an ivory man-of-war for six thousand francs, and buying it of your man-servant for five crowns only to sell it to you again, till you solemnly smashed it on discovering that you might have a real ship for the money it was costing you. The adventure occurred nine years ago, and Maxime de Trailles was the hero of it; but it is thought to fit you so well, that Maxime has lost the command of his frigate for good. In short, I cannot tell you everything, for you have furnished forth a perfect encyclopædia of tittle-tattle, which every woman tries to add to. In this state of affairs, the most prudish are ready to legitimatize any consolation bestowed by *Comte* Félix de Vandenesse—for their father is dead at last, yesterday.

"Your wife is the great success of the hour. Yesterday Madame de Camps was repeating all these stories to me at the Italian Opera. 'Don't talk to me,' said I, 'you none of you know half the facts. Paul had robbed the Bank and swindled the Treasury. He murdered Ezzelino, and caused the death of three Medoras of the Rue Saint-Denis, and, between you and me, I believe him to be implicated in the doings of the Ten Thousand. His agent is the notorious Jacques Collin, whom the police have never been able to find since his last escape from the hulks; Paul harbored him in his house. As you see, he is capable of any crime; he is deceiving the government. Now they have gone off together to see what they can do in India, and rob the Great Mogul.'—Madame de Camps understood that a woman of such distinction as herself ought not to use her pretty lips as a Venetian lion's maw.

"Many persons, on hearing these tragi-comedies, refuse to believe them; they defend human nature and noble sentiments, and insist that these are fictions. My dear fellow, Talleyrand made this clever remark, 'Everything happens.' Certainly even stranger things than this domestic conspiracy

happens under our eyes; but the world is so deeply interested in denying them, and in declaring that it is slandered, and besides, these great dramas are played so naturally, with a veneer of such perfect good taste, that I often have to wipe my eyeglass before I can see to the bottom of things. But I say once more, when a man is my friend with whom I have received the baptism of Champagne, and communion at the altar of Venus Commoda, when we have together been confirmed by the clawing fingers of the croupier, and when then my friend is in a false position, I would uproot twenty families to set him straight again.

"You must see that I have a real affection for you; have I ever to your knowledge written so long a letter as this is? So read with care all that follows.

"Alack! Paul; I must take to writing, I must get into the habit of jotting down the minutes for dispatches; I am starting on a political career. Within five years I mean to have a Minister's portfolio, or find myself an ambassador where I can stir public affairs round in my own way. There is an age when a man's fairest mistress is his country. I am joining the ranks of those who mean to overthrow not merely the existing Ministry, but their whole system. In fact, I am swimming in the wake of a prince who halts only on one foot, and whom I regard as a man of political genius, whose name is growing great in history: as complete a prince as a great artist may be. We are Ronquerolles, Montriveau, the Grandlieus, the Roche-Hugons, Sérizy, Féraud, and Granville, all united against the priestly party, as the silly party that is represented by the *Constitutionnel* ingeniously calls it. We mean to upset the two Vandenesses, the Ducs de Lenoncourt, de Navarreins, de Langeais, and de la Grande-Aumônerie. To gain our end, we may go so far as to form a coalition with la Fayette, the Orleanists, the Left—all men who must be got rid of as soon as we have won the day, for to govern on their principles is impossible; and we are capable of anything for the good of the country—and our own.

"Personal questions as to the King's person are mere sen-

timental folly in these days; they must be cleared away. From that point of view, the English, with their sort of Doge, are more advanced than we are. Politics have nothing to do with that, my dear fellow. Politics consist in giving the nation an impetus by creating an oligarchy embodying a fixed theory of government, and able to direct public affairs along a straight path, instead of allowing the country to be pulled in a thousand different directions, which is what has been happening for the last forty years in our beautiful France—at once so intelligent and so sottish, so wise and so foolish; it needs a system, indeed, much more than men. What are individuals in this great question? If the end is a great one, if the country may live happy and free from trouble, what do the masses care for the profits of our stewardship, our fortune, privileges, and pleasures?

"I am now standing firm on my feet. I have at the present moment a hundred and fifty thousand francs a year in the Three per Cents, and a reserve of two hundred thousand francs to repair damages. Even this does not seem to me very much ballast in the pocket of a man starting left foot foremost to scale the heights of power.

"A fortunate accident settled the question of my setting out on this career, which did not particularly smile on me, for you know my predilection for the life of the East. After thirty-five years of slumber, my highly-respected mother woke up to the recollection that she had a son who might do her honor. Often when a vine-stock is eradicated, some years after shoots come up to the surface of the ground; well, my dear boy, my mother had almost torn me up by the roots from her heart, and I sprouted again in her head. At the age of fifty-eight, she thinks herself old enough to think no more of any men but her son. At this juncture she has met in some hot-water cauldron, at I know not what baths, a delightful old maid—English, with two hundred and forty thousand francs a year; and, like a good mother, she has inspired her with an audacious ambition to become my wife. A maid of six-and-thirty, my word! Brought up in the strictest puritanical

principles, a steady sitting hen, who maintains that unfaithful wives should be publicly burnt. 'Where will you find wood enough?' I asked her. I could have sent her to the devil, for two hundred and forty thousand francs a year are no equivalent for liberty, nor a fair price for my physical and moral worth and my prospects. But she is the sole heiress of a gouty old fellow, some London brewer, who within a calculable time will leave her a fortune equal at least to what the sweet creature has already. Added to these advantages, she has a red nose, the eyes of a dead goat, a waist that makes one fear lest she should break into three pieces if she falls down, and the coloring of a badly painted doll. But—she is delightfully economical; but—she will adore her husband, do what he will; but—she has the English gift; she will manage my house, my stables, my servants, my estates better than any steward. She has all the dignity of virtue; she holds herself as erect as a confidante on the stage of the Français; nothing will persuade me that she has not been impaled and the shaft broken off in her body. Miss Stevens is, however, fair enough to be not too unpleasing if I must positively marry her. But—and this to me is truly pathetic—she has the hands of a woman as immaculate as the sacred ark; they are so red that I have not yet hit on any way to whiten them that will not be too costly, and I have no idea how to fine down her fingers, which are like sausages. Yes; she evidently belongs to the brew-house by her hands, and to the aristocracy by her money; but she is apt to affect the great lady a little too much, as rich English women do who want to be mistaken for them, and she displays her lobster's claws too freely.

"She has, however, as little intelligence as I could wish in a woman. If there were a stupider one to be found, I would set out to seek her. This girl, whose name is Dinah, will never criticise me; she will never contradict me; I shall be her Upper Chamber, her Lords and Commons. In short, Paul, she is indefeasible evidence of the English genius; she is a product of English mechanics brought to their highest pitch of perfection; she was undoubtedly made at Manchester,

between the manufactory of Perry's pens and the workshops for steam-engines. It eats, it drinks, it walks, it may have children, take good care of them, and bring them up admirably, and it apes a woman so well that you would believe it real.

"When my mother introduced us, she had set up the machine so cleverly, had so carefully fitted the pegs, and oiled the wheels so thoroughly, that nothing jarred; then, when she saw I did not make a very wry face, she set the springs in motion, and the woman spoke. Finally, my mother uttered the decisive words, 'Miss Dinah Stevens spends no more than thirty thousand francs a year, and has been traveling for seven years in order to economize.'—So there is another image, and that one is silver.

"Matters are so far advanced that the banns are to be published. We have got as far as 'My dear love.' Miss makes eyes at me that might floor a porter. The settlements are prepared. My fortune is not inquired into; Miss Stevens devotes a portion of hers to creating an entail in landed estate, bearing an income of two hundred and forty thousand francs, and to the purchase of a house, likewise entailed. The settlement credited to me is of a million francs. She has nothing to complain of. I leave her uncle's money untouched.

"The worthy brewer, who has helped to found the entail, was near bursting with joy when he heard that his niece was to be a marquise. He would be capable of doing something handsome for my eldest boy.

"I shall sell out of the funds as soon as they are up to eighty, and invest in land. Thus, in two years I may look to get six hundred thousand francs a year out of real estate. So, you see, Paul, I do not give my friends advice that I am not ready to act upon.

"If you had but listened to me, you would have an English wife, some Nabob's daughter, who would leave you the freedom of a bachelor and the independence necessary for playing the whist of ambition. I would concede my future wife to you if you were not married already. But that cannot be helped, and I am not the man to bid you chew the cud of the past.

"All this preamble was needful to explain to you that for the future my position in life will be such as a man needs if he wants to play the great game of pitch-and-toss. I cannot do without you, my friend. Instead of going to pickle in the Indies, you will find it much simpler to swim in my convoy in the waters of the Seine. Believe me, Paris is still the spot where fortune crops up most freely. Potosi is situated in the Rue Vivienne or the Rue de la Paix, the Place Vendôme, or the Rue de Rivoli. In every other country, manual labor, the sweat of the perspiring agent, marches and counter-marches, are indispensable to the accumulation of a fortune; here intelligence is sufficient. Here a man, even of moderate talent, may discover a gold-mine as he puts on his slippers, or picks his teeth after dinner, as he goes to bed or gets up in the morning. Find me a spot on earth where a good common-place idea brings in more money, or is more immediately understood than it is here? If I climb to the top of the tree, am I the man to refuse you a hand, a word, a signature? Do not we young scamps need a friend we can rely on, if it were only to compromise him in our place and stead, to send him forth to die as a private, so as to save the General? Politics are impossible without a man of honor at hand, to whom everything may be said and done.

"This, then, is my advice to you. Let the *Belle-Amélie* sail without you; return here like a lightning flash, and I will arrange a duel for you with Félix de Vandenesse, in which you must fire first, and down with your man as dead as a pigeon. In France an outraged husband who kills his man is at once respectable and respected. No one ever makes game of him! Fear, my dear boy, is an element of social life, and a means of success for those whose eyes never fall before the gaze of any other man. I, who care no more for life than for a cup of ass's milk, and who never felt a qualm of fear, have observed the strange effects of that form of emotion on modern manners. Some dread the idea of losing the enjoyments to which they are fettered, others that of parting from some woman. The adventurous temper of past times, when a man

threw away his life like a slipper, has ceased to exist. In many men courage is merely a clever speculation on the fear that may seize their adversary. None but the Poles now, in Europe, ever fight for the pleasure of it; they still cultivate the art for art's sake, and not as a matter of calculation. Kill Vandenesse, and your wife will tremble; your mother-in-law will tremble, the public will tremble; you will be rehabilitated, you will proclaim your frantic passion for your wife, every one will believe you, and you will be a hero. Such is France.

"I shall not stickle over a hundred thousand francs with you. You can pay your principal debts, and can prevent utter ruin by pledging your property on a time bargain with option of repurchase, for you will soon be in a position that will allow you to pay off the mortgage before the time is up. Also, knowing your wife's character, you can henceforth rule her with a word. While you loved her you could not hold your own; now, having ceased to love her, your power will be irresistible. I shall have made your mother-in-law as supple as a glove; for what you have to do is to reinstate yourself with the hundred and fifty thousand francs those women have saved for themselves.

"So give up your self-exile, which always seems to me the charcoal-brazier of men of brains. If you run away, you leave slander mistress of the field. The gambler who goes home to fetch his money and comes back to the tables loses all. You must have your funds in your pocket. You appear to me to be seeking fresh reinforcements in the Indies. No good at all!—We are two gamblers at the green table of politics; between you and me loans are a matter of course. So take post-horses, come to Paris, and begin a new game; with Henri de Marsay for a partner you will win, for Henri de Marsay knows what he wants and when to strike.

"This, you see, is where we stand. My real father is in the English Ministry. We shall have connections with Spain through the Evangelistas; for as soon as your mother-in-law and I have measured claws, we shall perceive that when devil meets devil there is nothing to be gained on either side.

Montriveau is a Lieutenant-General; he will certainly be War Minister sooner or later, for his eloquence gives him much power in the Chamber. Ronquerolles is in the Ministry and on the Privy Council. Martial de la Roche-Hugon is appointed Minister to Germany, and made a peer of France, and he has brought us as an addition Marshal the Duc de Carigliano and all round 'rump' of the Empire, which so stupidly held on to the rear of the Restoration. Sérizy is leader of the State Council; he is indispensable there. Granville is master of the legal party, he has two sons on the Bench. The Grandlieus are in high favor at Court. Féraud is the soul of the Gondreville set, low intriguers who, I know not why, are always at the top.—Thus supported, what have we to fear? We have a foot in every capital, an eye in every cabinet; we hem in the whole administration without their suspecting it.

"Is not the money question a mere trifle, nothing at all, when all this machinery is ready? And, above all, what is a woman? Will you never be anything but a schoolboy? What is life, my dear fellow, when it is wrapped up in a woman? A ship over which we have no command, which obeys a wild compass though it has indeed a lodestone; which runs before every wind that blows, and in which the man really is a galley-slave, obedient not only to the law, but to every rule improvised by his driver, without the possibility of retaliation. Phaugh!

"I can understand that from passion, or the pleasure to be found in placing our power in a pair of white hands, a man should obey his wife—but when it comes to obeying Médor—then away with Angelica!—The great secret of social alchemy, my dear sir, is to get the best of everything out of each stage of our life, to gather all its leaves in spring, all its flowers in summer, all its fruits in autumn. Now we—I and some boon companions—have enjoyed ourselves for twelve years, like musketeers, black, white, and red, refusing ourselves nothing, not even a filibustering expedition now and again; henceforth we mean to shake down ripe plums, at an age when

experience has ripened the harvest. Come, join us; you shall have a share of the pudding we mean to stir.

"Come, and you will find a friend wholly yours in the skin of

"HENRI DE M."

At the moment when Paul de Manerville finished reading this letter, of which every sentence fell like a sledge-hammer on the tower of his hopes, his illusions, and his love, he was already beyond the Azores. In the midst of this ruin, rage surged up in him, cold and impotent rage.

"What had I done to them?" he asked himself.

This question is the impulse of the simpleton, of the weak natures, which, as they can see nothing, can foresee nothing.

"Henri, Henri!" he cried aloud. "The one true friend!"

Many men would have gone mad. Paul went to bed and slept the deep sleep which supervenes on immeasurable disaster; as Napoleon slept after the battle of Waterloo.

PARIS, *September–October* 1835.

A START IN LIFE

TO LAURE

To whose bright and modest wit I owe the idea of this Scene. Hers be the honor!

Her brother,
DE BALZAC.

RAILROADS, in a future now not far distant, must lead to the disappearance of certain industries, and modify others, especially such as are concerned in the various modes of transport commonly used in the neighborhood of Paris. In fact, the persons and the things which form the accessories of this little drama will ere long give it the dignity of an archæological study. Will not our grandchildren be glad to know something of a time which they will speak of as the old days?

For instance, the picturesque vehicles known as *Coucous*, which used to stand on the Place de la Concorde and crowd the Cours-la-Reine, which flourished so greatly during a century, and still survived in 1830, exist no more. Even on the occasion of the most attractive rural festivity, hardly one is to be seen on the road in this year 1842.

In 1820 not all the places famous for their situation, and designated as the environs of Paris, had any regular service of coaches. The Touchards, father and son, had however a monopoly of conveyances to and from the largest towns within a radius of fifteen leagues, and their establishment occupied splendid premises in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis. In spite of their old standing and their strenuous efforts, in spite of their large capital and all the advantages of strong centralization, Touchards' service had formidable rivals in the *Coucous* of the Faubourg Saint-Denis for distances of seven or

eight leagues out of Paris. The Parisian has indeed such a passion for the country, that local establishments also held their own in many cases against the *Petites Messageries,* a name given to Touchards' short-distance coaches, to distinguish them from the *Grandes Messageries,* the general conveyance company, in the Rue Montmartre.

At that time the success of the Touchards stimulated speculation; conveyances were put on the road to and from the smallest towns—handsome, quick, and commodious vehicles, starting and returning at fixed hours; and these, in a circuit of ten leagues or so, gave rise to vehement competition. Beaten on the longer distances, the *Coucou* fell back on short runs, and survived a few years longer. It finally succumbed when the omnibus had proved the possibility of packing eighteen persons into a vehicle drawn by two horses. Nowadays the *Coucou,* if a bird of such heavy flight is by chance still to be found in the recesses of some store for dilapidated vehicles, would, from its structure and arrangement, be the subject of learned investigations, like Cuvier's researches on the animals discovered in the lime-quarries of Montmartre.

These smaller companies, being threatened by larger speculations competing, after 1822, with the Touchards, had nevertheless a fulcrum of support in the sympathies of the residents in the places they plied to. The master of the concern, who was both owner and driver of the vehicle, was usually an innkeeper of the district, to whom its inhabitants were as familiar as were their common objects and interests. He was intelligent in fulfilling commissions; he asked less for his little services, and therefore obtained more, than the employés of the Touchards. He was clever at evading the necessity for an excise pass. At a pinch he would infringe the rules as to the number of passengers he might carry. In fact, he was master of the affections of the people. Hence, when a rival appeared in the field, if the old-established conveyance ran on alternate days of the week, there were persons who would postpone their journey to take it in the company of the original driver, even though his vehicle and horses were none of the safest and best.

One of the lines which the Toucharde, father and son, tried hard to monopolize, but which was hotly disputed—nay, which is still a subject of dispute with their successors the Toulouses—was that between Paris and Beaumont-sur-Oise, a highly profitable district, since in 1822 three lines of conveyances worked it at once. The Touchards lowered their prices, but in vain, and in vain increased the number of services; in vain they put superior vehicles on the road, the competitors held their own, so profitable is a line running through little towns like Saint-Denis and Saint-Brice, and such a string of villages as Pierrefitte, Groslay, Écouen, Poncelles, Moiselles, Baillet, Monsoult, Maffliers, Franconville, Presles, Nointel, Nerville, and others. The Touchards at last extended their line of service as far as to Chambly; the rivals ran to Chambly. And at the present day the Toulouses go as far as Beauvais.

On this road, the highroad to England, there is a place which is not ill named *la Cave* [the Cellar], a hollow way leading down into one of the most delightful nooks of the Oise valley, and to the little town of l'Isle-Adam, doubly famous as the native place of the now extinct family de l'Isle-Adam, and as the splendid residence of the Princes of Bourbon-Conti. L'Isle-Adam is a charming little town, flanked by two large hamlets, that of Nogent and that of Parmain, both remarkable for the immense quarries which have furnished the materials for the finest edifices of Paris, and indeed abroad too, for the base and capitals of the theatre at Brussels are of Nogent stone.

Though remarkable for its beautiful points of view, and for famous châteaux built by princes, abbots, or famous architects, as at Cassan, Stors, le Val, Nointel, Persan, etc., this district, in 1822, had as yet escaped competition, and was served by two coach-owners, who agreed to work it between them. This exceptional state of things was based on causes easily explained. From la Cave, where, on the highroad, begins the fine paved way due to the magnificence of the Princes of Conti, to l'Isle-Adam, is a distance of two leagues:

no main line coach could diverge so far from the highroad, especially as l'Isle-Adam was at that time the end of things in that direction. The road led thither, and ended there. Of late, a highroad joins the valley of Montromency to that of l'Isle-Adam. Leaving Saint-Denis it passes through Saint-Leu-Taverny, Méru, l'Isle-Adam, and along by the Oise as far as Beaumont. But in 1822 the only road to l'Isle-Adam was that made by the Princes de Conti.

Consequently Pierrotin and his colleague reigned supreme from Paris to l'Isle-Adam, beloved of all the district. Pierrotin's coach and his friend's ran by Stors, le Val, Parmain, Champagne, Mours, Prérolles, Nogent, Nerville, and Maffliers. Pierrotin was so well known that the residents at Monsoult, Moiselles, Baillet, and Saint-Brice, though living on the highroad, made use of his coach, in which there was more often a chance of a seat than in the Beaumont *diligence,* which was always full. Pierrotin and his friendly rival agreed to admiration. When Pierrotin started from l'Isle-Adam, the other set out from Paris and *vice-versâ.* Of the opposing driver, nothing need be said. Pierrotin was the favorite in the line. And of the two, he alone appears on the scene in this veracious history. So it will suffice to say that the two coach-drivers lived on excellent terms, competing in honest warfare, and contending for customers without sharp practice. In Paris, out of economy, they put up at the same inn, using the same yard, the same stable, the same coach-shed, the same office, the same booking clerk. And this fact is enough to show that Pierrotin and his opponents were, as the common folks say, of a very good sort.

That inn, at the corner of the Rue d'Enghien, exists to this day, and is called the *Silver Lion.* The proprietor of this hostlery—a hostlery from time immemorial for coach-drivers—himself managed a line of vehicles to Dammartin on so sound a basis that his neighbors the Touchards, of the *Petites Messageries* opposite, never thought of starting a conveyance on that road.

Though the coaches for l'Isle-Adam were supposed to set

out punctually, Pierrotin and his friend displayed a degree of indulgence on this point which, while it won them the affections of the natives, brought down severe remonstrances from strangers who were accustomed to the exactitude of the larger public companies; but the two drivers of these vehicles, half *diligence,* half *coucou,* always found partisans among their regular customers. In the afternoon the start fixed for four o'clock always dragged on till half-past; and in the morning, though eight was the hour named, the coach never got off before nine.

This system was, however, very elastic. In summer, the golden season for coaches, the time of departure, rigorously punctual as concerned strangers, gave way for natives of the district. This method afforded Pierrotin the chance of pocketing the price of two places for one when a resident in the town came early to secure a place already booked by a bird of passage, who, by ill-luck, was behind time. Such elastic rules would certainly not be approved by a Puritan moralist; but Pierrotin and his colleague justified it by the hard times, by their losses during the winter season, by the necessity they would presently be under of purchasing better carriages, and finally, by an exact application of the rules printed on their tickets, copies of which were of the greatest rarity, and never given but to those travelers who were so perverse as to insist.

Pierrotin, a man of forty, was already the father of a family. He had left the cavalry in 1815 when the army was disbanded, and then this very good fellow had succeeded his father, who drove a *coucou* between l'Isle-Adam and Paris on somewhat erratic principles. After marrying the daughter of a small innkeeper, he extended and regulated the business, and was noted for his intelligence and military punctuality. Brisk and decisive, Pierrotin—a nickname, no doubt—had a mobile countenance which gave an amusing expression and a semblance of intelligence to a face reddened by exposure to the weather. Nor did he lack the "gift of the gab" which is caught by intercourse with the world, and by seeing different parts of

it. His voice, by dint of talking to his horses, and shouting to others to get out of the way, was somewhat harsh, but he could soften it to a customer.

His costume, that of coach-drivers of the superior class, consisted of stout, strong boots, heavy with nails, and made at l'Isle-Adam, trousers of bottle-green velveteen, and a jacket of the same, over which, in the exercise of his functions, he wore a blue blouse, embroidered in colors on the collar, shoulder-pieces, and wristbands. On his head was a cap with a peak. His experience of military service had stamped on Pierrotin the greatest respect for social superiority, and a habit of obedience to people of the upper ranks; but while he was ready to be on familiar terms with the modest citizen, he was always respectful to women, of whatever class. At the same time, the habit of "carting folks about," to use his own expression, had led him to regard his travelers as parcels; though, being on feet, they demanded less care than the other merchandise, which was the aim and end of the service.

Warned by the general advance, which since the peace begun to tell on his business, Pierrotin was determined not to be beaten by the progress of the world. Ever since the last summer season he had talked a great deal of a certain large conveyance he had ordered of Farry, Breilmann and Co., the best diligence builders, as being needed by the constant increase of travelers. Pierrotin's plant at that time consisted of two vehicles. One, which did duty for the winter, and the only one he ever showed to the tax-collector, was of the *coucou* species. The bulging sides of this vehicle allowed it to carry six passengers on two seats as hard as iron, though covered with yellow worsted velvet. These seats were divided by a wooden bar, which could be removed at pleasure or refixed in two grooves in the sides, at the height of a man's back. This bar, perfidiously covered by Pierrotin with yellow velvet, and called by him a back to the seat, was the cause of much despair to the travelers from the difficulty of moving and readjusting it. If the board was painful to fix, it was far more so to the shoulder-blades when it was fitted; on the other hand, if it

was not unshipped, it made entrance and egress equally perilous, especially to women.

Though each seat of this vehicle, which bulged at the sides like a woman before childbirth, was licensed to hold no more than three passengers, it was not unusual to see eight packed in it like herrings in a barrel. Pierrotin declared that they were all the more comfortable, since they formed a compact and immovable mass, whereas three were constantly thrown against each other, and often ran the risk of spoiling their hats against the roof of the vehicle by reason of the violent jolting on the road. In front of the body of this carriage there was a wooden box-seat, Pierrotin's driving-seat, which could also carry three passengers, who were designated, as all the world knows, as *lapins* (rabbits). Occasionally, Pierrotin would accommodate four *lapins,* and then sat askew on a sort of box below the front seat for the *lapins* to rest their feet on; this was filled with straw or such parcels as could not be injured.

The body of the vehicle, painted yellow, was ornamented by a band of bright blue, on which might be read in white letters, on each side, *L'Isle-Adam—Paris;* and on the back, *Service de l'Isle-Adam.* Our descendants will be under a mistake if they imagine that this conveyance could carry no more than thirteen persons, including Pierrotin. On great occasions three more could be seated in a square compartment covered with tarpaulin in which trunks, boxes, and parcels were generally piled; but Pierrotin was too prudent to let any but regular customers sit there, and only took them up three or four hundred yards outside the barrier. These passengers in the *poulailler,* or hen-coop, the name given by the conductors to this part of a coach, were required to get out before reaching any village on the road where there was a station of gendarmerie; for the overloading, forbidden by the regulations *for the greater safety of travelers,* was in these cases so excessive, that the gendarme—always Pierrotin's very good friend—could not have excused himself from reporting such a flagrant breach of rules. But thus Pierrotin's vehicle, on certain Sat-

urday evenings and Monday mornings, carted out fifteen passengers; and then to help pull it, he gave his large but aged horse, named Rougeot, the assistance of a second nag about as big as a pony, which he could never sufficiently praise. This little steed was a mare called Bichette; and she ate little, she was full of spirit, nothing could tire her, she was worth her weight in gold!

"My wife would not exchange her for that great lazy beast Rougeot!" Pierrotin would exclaim, when a traveler laughed at him about this concentrated *extract of horse*.

The difference between this carriage and the other was, that the second had four wheels. This vehicle, a remarkable structure, always spoken of as "the four-wheeled coach," could hold seventeen passengers, being intended to carry fourteen. It rattled so preposterously that the folks in l'Isle-Adam would say, "Here comes Pierrotin!" when he had but just come out of the wood that hangs on the slope to the valley. It was divided into two lobes, one of which, called the *intérieur,* the body of the coach, carried six passengers on two seats, and the other, a sort of cab stuck on in front, was styled the *coupé*. This coupé could be closed by an inconvenient and eccentric arrangement of glass windows, which would take too long to describe in this place. The *four-wheeled coach* also had at top a sort of gig with a hood, into which Pierrotin packed six travelers; it closed with leather curtains. Pierrotin himself had an almost invisible perch below the glass windows of the coupé.

The coach to l'Isle-Adam only paid the taxes levied on public vehicles for the *coucou,* represented to carry six travelers, and whenever Pierrotin turned out the "four-wheeled coach" he took out a special license. This may seen strange indeed in these days; but at first the tax on vehicles, imposed somewhat timidly, allowed the owners of coaches to play these little tricks, which gave them the pleasure of "putting their thumbs to their noses" behind the collector's back, as they phrased it. By degrees, however, the hungry Exchequer grew strict: it allowed no vehicle to take the road without displaying

the two plates which now certify that their capacity is registered and the tax paid. Everything, even a tax, has its age of innocence, and towards the end of 1822 that age was not yet over. Very often, in summer, the four-wheeled coach and the covered chaise made the journey in company, carrying in all thirty passengers, while Pierrotin paid only for six.

On these golden days the convoy started from the Faubourg Saint-Denis at half-past four, and arrived in style at l'Isle-Adam by ten o'clock at night. And then Pierrotin, proud of his run, which necessitated the hire of extra horses, would say, "We have made a good pace to-day!" To enable him to do nine leagues in five hours with his machinery, he did not stop, as the coaches usually do on this road, at Saint-Brice, Moisselles, and la Cave.

The *Silver Lion* inn occupied a plot of ground running very far back. Though the front to the Rue Saint-Denis has no more than three or four windows, there was at that time, on one side of the long yard, with the stables at the bottom, a large house backing on the wall of the adjoining property. The entrance was through an arched way under the first floor, and there was standing-room here for two or three coaches. In 1822, the booking-office for all the lines that put up at the *Silver Lion* was kept by the innkeeper's wife, who had a book for each line; she took the money, wrote down the names, and good-naturedly accommodated passengers' luggage in her vast kitchen. The travelers were quite satisfied with this patriarchally free-and-easy mode of business. If they came too early, they sat down by the fire within the immense chimney-place, or lounged in the passage, or went to the cafe *de l'Echiquier,* at the corner of the street of that name, parallel to the Rue d'Enghien, from which it is divided by a few houses only.

Quite early in the autumn of that year, one Saturday morning, Pierrotin, his hands stuffed through holes in his blouse and into his pockets, was standing at the front gate of the *Silver Lion,* whence he had a perspective view of the inn kitchen, and beyond it of the long yard and the stables at the

end, like black caverns. The Dammartin diligence had just started, and was lumbering after Touchard's coaches. It was past eight o'clock. Under the wide archway, over which was inscribed on a long board, Hotel du Lion d'Argent, the stableman and coach-porters were watching the vehicles start at the brisk pace which deludes the traveler into the belief that the horses will continue to keep it up.

"Shall I bring out the horses, master?" said Pierrotin's stable-boy, when there was nothing more to be seen.

"A quarter-past eight, and I see no passengers," said Pierrotin. "What the deuce has become of them? Put the horses to, all the same.—No parcels neither. Bless us and save us! This afternoon, now, *he* won't know how to stow his passengers, as it is so fine, and I have only four booked. There's a pretty outlook for a Saturday! That's always the way when you're wanting the ready! It's dog's work, and work for a dog!"

"And if you had any, where would you stow 'em? You have nothing but your two-wheel cab," said the luggage-porter, trying to smooth down Pierrotin.

"And what about my new coach?"

"Then there is such a thing as your new coach?" asked the sturdy Auvergnat, grinning and showing his front teeth, as white and as broad as almonds.

"You old good-for-nothing! Why, she will take the road to-morrow, Sunday, and we want eighteen passengers to fill her!"

Oh, ho! a fine turnout! that'll make the folk stare!" said the Auvergnat.

"A coach like the one that runs to Beaumont, I can tell you! Brand new, painted in red and gold, enough to make the Touchards burst with envy! It will take three horses. I have found a fellow to Rougeot, and Bichette will trot unicorn like a good 'un.—Come, harness up," said Pierrotin, who was looking towards the Porte Saint-Denis while cramming his short pipe with tobacco, "I see a lady out there, and a little man with bundles under his arm. They are looking for the


ON D'ARGENT

Pierrotin sat down on one of the enormous curb-stones



Silver Lion, for they would have nothing to say to the *coucous* on the stand. Hey day, I seem to know the lady for a customer."

"You often get home filled up after starting empty," said his man.

"But no parcels!" replied Pierrotin. "By the Mass! What devil's luck!"

And Pierrotin sat down on one of the enormous curbstones which protected the lower part of the wheels from the friction of the axles, but he wore an anxious and thoughtful look that was not usual with him. This dialogue, apparently so trivial, had stirred up serious anxieties at the bottom of Pierrotin's heart. And what could trouble Pierrotin's heart but the thought of a handsome coach? To cut a dash on the road, to rival the Touchards, extend his service, carry passengers who might congratulate him on the increased convenience due to the improvements in coach-building, instead of hearing constant complaints of his drags, this was Pierrotin's laudable ambition.

Now the worthy man, carried away by his desire to triumph over his colleague, and to induce him some day perhaps to leave him without a competitor on the road to l'Isle-Adam, had overstrained his resources. He had ordered his coach from Farry, Breilmann, and Co., the makers who had lately introduced English coach-springs in the place of the swan's-neck and other old-fashioned French springs; but these hard-hearted and mistrustful makers would only deliver the vehicle for ready cash. Not caring, indeed, to build a conveyance so unsalable if it were left on their hands, these shrewd tradesmen had not undertaken the job till Pierrotin had paid them two thousand francs on account. To satisfy their justifiable requirements, Pierrotin had exhausted his savings and his credit. He had bled his wife, his father-in-law, and his friends. He had been to look at the superb vehicle the day before in the painter's shop; it was ready, and waiting to take the road, but in order to see it there on the following day he must pay up.

Hence Pierrotin was in need of a thousand francs! Being in debt to the innkeeper for stable-room, he dared not borrow the sum of him. For lack of this thousand francs, he risked losing the two thousand already paid in advance, to say nothing of five hundred, the cost of Rougeot the second, and three hundred for new harness, for which, however, he had three months' credit. And yet, urged by the wrath of despair and the folly of vanity, he had just declared that his coach would start on the morrow, Sunday. In paying the fifteen hundred francs on account of the two thousand five hundred, he had hoped that the coachmakers' feelings might be touched so far that they would let him have the vehicle; but, after three minutes' reflection, he exclaimed:

"No, no! they are sharks, perfect skinflints.—Supposing I were to apply to Monsieur Moreau, the steward at Presles—he is such a good fellow, that he would, perhaps, take my note of hand at six months' date," thought he, struck by a new idea.

At this instant, a servant out of livery, carrying a leather trunk, on coming across from the Touchards' office, where he had failed to find a place vacant on the Chambly coach starting at one o'clock, said to the driver:

"Pierrotin?—Is that you?"

"What then?" said Pierrotin.

"If you can wait less than a quarter of an hour, you can carry my master; if not, I will take his portmanteau back again, and he must make the best of a chaise off the stand."

"I will wait two—three-quarters of an hour, and five minutes more to that, my lad," said Pierrotin, with a glance at the smart little leather trunk, neatly strapped, and fastened with a brass lock engraved with a coat-of-arms.

"Very good, then, there you are," said the man, relieving his shoulder of the trunk, which Pierrotin lifted, weighed in his hand, and scrutinized.

"Here," said he to his stable-boy, "pack it round with soft hay, and put it in the boot at the back.—There is no name on it," said he.

"There are monseigneur's arms," replied the servant.

"Monseigneur? worth his weight in gold!—Come and have a short drink," said Pierrotin, with a wink, as he led the way to the café of the *Echiquiers*.—"Two of absinthe," cried he to the waiter as they went in.—"But who is your master, and where is he bound? I never saw you before," said Pierrotin to the servant as they clinked glasses.

"And for very good reasons," replied the footman. "My master does not go your way once a year, and always in his own carriage. He prefers the road by the Orge valley, where he has the finest park near Paris, a perfect Versailles, a family estate, from which he takes his name.—Don't you know Monsieur Moreau?"

"The steward at Presles?" said Pierrotin.

"Well, Monsieur le Comte is going to spend two days at Presles."

"Oh, ho, then my passenger is the Comte de Sérizy!" cried Pierrotin.

"Yes, my man, no less. But, mind, he sends strict orders. If you have any of the people belonging to your parts in your chaise, do not mention the Count's name; he wants to travel *incognito*, and desired me to tell you so, and promise you a handsome tip."

"Hah! and has this hide-and-seek journey anything to do, by any chance, with the bargain that old Léger, the farmer at les Moulineaux, wants to make?"

"I don't know," replied the man; "but the fat is in the fire. Last evening I was sent to the stables to order the chaise *à la Daumont*, by seven this morning, to drive to Presles; but at seven my master countermanded it. Augustin, his valet, ascribes this change of plan to the visit of a lady, who seemed to have come from the country."

"Can any one have had anything to say against Monsieur Moreau? The best of men, the most honest, the king of men, I say! He might have made a deal more money than he has done if he had chosen, take my word for it!——"

"Then he was very foolish," said the servant sententiously.

"Then Monsieur de Sérizy is going to live at Presles at last? The château has been refurnished and done up," said Pierrotin after a pause. "Is it true that two hundred thousand francs have been spent on it already?"

"If you or I had the money that has been spent there, we could set up in the world.—If Madame la Comtesse goes down there, and Moreaus' fun will be over," added the man, with mysterious significance.

"A good man is Monsieur Moreau," repeated Pierrotin, who was still thinking of borrowing the thousand francs from the steward; "a man that makes his men work, and does not spare them; who gets all the profit out of the land, and for his master's benefit too. A good man! He often comes to Paris, and always by my coach; he gives me something handsome for myself, and always has a lot of parcels to and fro. Three or four a day, sometimes for monsieur and sometimes for madame; a bill of fifty francs a month say, only on the carrier's score. Though madame holds her head a little above her place, she is fond of her children; I take them to school for her and bring them home again. And she always gives me five francs, and your biggest pot would not do more. And whenever I have any one from them or to them, I always drive right up to the gates of the house—I could not do less, now, could I?"

"They say that Monsieur Moreau had no more than a thousand crowns in the world when Monsieur le Comte put him in as land steward at Presles?" said the servant.

"But in seventeen years' time—since 1806—the man must have made something," replied Pierrotin.

"To be sure," said the servant, shaking his head. "And masters are queer too. I hope, for Moreau's sake, that he has feathered his nest."

"I often deliver hampers at your house in the Chaussée-d'Antin," said Pierrotin, "but I have never had the privilege of seeing either the master or his lady."

"Monsieur le Comte is a very good sort," said the man confidentially; "but if he wants you to hold your tongue about his

cognito, there is a screw loose you may depend.—At least, that is what we think at home. For why else should he counter-order the traveling carriage? Why ride in a public chaise? A peer of France might take a hired chaise, you would think."

"A hired chaise might cost him as much as forty francs for the double journey; for, I can tell, if you don't know our road, it is fit for squirrels to climb. Everlastingly up and down!" said Pierrotin. "Peer of France or tradesman, everybody looks at both sides of a five-franc piece.—If this trip means mischief to Monsieur Moreau—dear, dear, I should be vexed indeed if any harm came to him. By the Mass! Can no way be found of warning him? For he is a real good 'un, an honest sort, the king of men, I say——"

"Pooh! Monsieur le Comte is much attached to Monsieur Moreau," said the other. "But if you will take a bit of good advice from me, mind your own business, and let him mind his. We all have quite enough to do to take care of ourselves. You just do what you are asked to do; all the more because it does not pay to play fast and loose with monseigneur. Add to that, the Count is generous. If you oblige him that much," said the man, measuring off the nail of one finger, "he will reward you that much," and he stretched out his arm.

This judicious hint, and yet more the illustrative figure, coming from a man so high in office as the Comte de Sérizy's second footman, had the effect of cooling Pierrotin's zeal for the steward of Presles.

"Well, good-day, Monsieur Pierrotin," said the man.

A short sketch of the previous history of the Comte de Sérizy and his steward is here necessary to explain the little drama about to be played in Pierrotin's coach.

Monsieur Hugret de Sérizy is descended in a direct line from the famous Président Hugret, ennobled by Francis the First. They bear as arms *party per pale or and sable, an orle and two lozenges counterchanged.* Motto, *I Semper Melius eris,* which, like the two winders assumed as supporters, shows the modest pretence of the citizen class at a time when each

rank of society had its own place in the State, and also the artlessness of the age in the punning motto, where *eris* with the *I* at the beginning, and the final *S* of *Melius,* represent the name Serisi of the estate, whence the title.

The present Count's father was a President of *Parlement* before the Revolution. He himself, a member of the High Council of State in 1787, at the early age of two-and-twenty, was favorably known for certain reports on some delicate matters. He did not emigrate during the Revolution, but remained on his lands of Sérizy, near Arpajon, where the respect felt for his father protected him from molestation.

After spending a few years in nursing the old President, whom he lost in 1794, he was elected to the Council of Five Hundred, and took up his legislative functions as a distraction from his grief.

After the eighteenth Brumaire, Monsieur de Sérizy became the object—as did all the families connected with the old *Parlements*—of the First Consul's attentions, and by him he was appointed a Councillor of State to reorganize one of the most disorganized branches of the Administration. Thus this scion of a great historical family became one of the most important wheels in the vast and admirable machinery due to Napoleon. The State Councillor ere long left his department to be made a Minister. The Emperor created him Count and Senator, and he was pro-consul to two different kingdoms in succession.

In 1806, at the age of forty, he married the sister of the *ci-devant* Marquis de Ronquerolles, and widow, at the age of twenty, of Gaubert, one of the most distinguished of the Republican Generals, who left her all his wealth. This match, suitable in point of rank, doubled the Comte de Sérizy's already considerable fortune; he was now the brother-in-law of the *ci-devant* Marquis de Rouvre, whom Napoleon created Count and appointed to be his chamberlain.

In 1814, worn out with incessant work, Monsieur de Sérizy, whose broken health needed rest, gave up all his appointments, left the district of which Napoleon had made him Governor,

and came to Paris, where the Emperor was compelled by ocular evidence to concede his claims. This indefatigable master, who could not believe in fatigue in other people, had at first supposed the necessity that prompted the Comte de Sérizy to be simple defection. Though the Senator was not in disgrace, it was said that he had cause for complaint of Napoleon. Consequently, when the Bourbons came back, Louis XVIII., whom Monsieur de Sérizy acknowledged as his legitimate sovereign, granted to the Senator, now a peer of France, the highly confidential post of Steward of his Privy Purse, and made him a Minister of State.

On the 20th March, Monsieur de Sérizy did not follow the King to Ghent; he made it known to Napoleon that he remained faithful to the House of Bourbon, and accepted no peerage during the hundred days, but spent that brief reign on his estate of Sérizy. After the Emperor's second fall, the Count naturally resumed his seat in the Privy Council, was one of the Council of State, and Liquidator on behalf of France in the settlement of the indemnities demanded by foreign powers.

He had no love of personal magnificence, no ambition even, but exerted great influence in public affairs. No important political step was ever taken without his being consulted, but he never went to Court, and was seldom seen in his own drawing-room. His noble life, devoted to work from the first, ended by being perpetual work and nothing else. The Count rose at four in the morning in all seasons, worked till midday, then took up his duties as a Peer, or as Vice-President of the Council, and went to bed at nine.

Monsieur de Sérizy had long worn the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor; he also had the orders of the Golden Fleece, of Saint Andrew of Russia, of the Prussian Eagle; in short, almost every order of the European Courts. No one was less conspicuous or more valuable than he in the world of politics. As may be supposed, to a man of his temper the flourish of Court favor and worldly success were a matter of indifference.

But no man, unless he is a priest, can live such a life with-

out some strong motive; and his mysterious conduct had its key—a cruel one. The Count had loved his wife before he married her, and in him this passion had withstood all the domestic discomforts of matrimony with a widow who remained mistress of herself, after as well as before her second marriage, and who took all the more advantage of her liberty because Monsieur de Sérizy indulged her as a mother indulges a spoilt child. Incessant work served him as a shield against his heartfelt woes, buried with the care that a man engaged in politics takes to hide such secrets. And he fully understood how ridiculous jealousy would be in the eyes of the world, which would certainly never have admitted the possibility of conjugal passion in a time-worn official.

How was it that his wife had thus bewitched him from the first days of marriage? Why had he suffered in those early days without taking his revenge? Why did he no longer dare to be revenged? And why, deluded by hope, had he allowed time to slip away? By what means had his young, pretty, clever wife reduced him to subjection? The answer to these questions would require a long story, out of place in this "Scene," and women, if not men, may be able to guess it. At the same time, it may be observed that the Count's incessant work and many sorrows had unfortunately done much to deprive him of the advantages indispensable to a man who has to compete with unfavorable comparisons. The saddest perhaps of all the Count's secrets was the fact that his wife's repulsion was partly justified by ailments which he owed entirely to overwork. Kind, nay, more than kind, to his wife, he made her mistress in her own house; she received all Paris, she went into the country, or she came back again, precisely as though she were still a widow; he took care of her money, and supplied her luxuries as if he had been her agent.

The Countess held her husband in the highest esteem, indeed, she liked his turn of wit. Her approbation could give him pleasure, and thus she could do what she liked with the poor man by sitting and chatting with him for an hour. Like the great nobles of former days, the Count so effectually pro-

tected his wife that he would have regarded any slur cast on her reputation as an unpardonable insult to himself. The world greatly admired his character, and Madame de Sérizy owed much to her husband. Any other woman, even though she belonged to so distinguished a family as that of Ronquerolles, might have found herself disgraced for ever. The Countess was very ungrateful—but charming in her ingratitude. And from time to time she would pour balm on the Count's wounds.

We must now explain the cause of the Minister's hurried journey and wish to remain unknown.

A rich farmer of Beaumont-sur-Oise, named Léger, held a farm of which the various portions were all fractions of the estate owned by the Count, thus impairing the splendid property of Presles. The farm-lands belonged to a townsman of Beaumont-sur-Oise, one Margueron. The lease he had granted to Léger in 1799, at a time when the advance since made in agriculture could not be foreseen, was nearly run out, and the owner had refused Léger's terms for renewing it. Long since, Monsieur de Sérizy, wanting to be quit of the worry and squabbling that come of such enclosed plots, had hoped to be able to buy the farm, having heard that Monsieur Margueron's sole ambition was to see his only son, a modest official, promoted to be collector of the revenue at Senlis.

Moreau had hinted to his master that he had a dangerous rival in the person of old Léger. The farmer, knowing that he could run up the land to a high price by selling it piecemeal to the Count, was capable of paying a sum so high as to outbid the profit derivable from the collectorship to be bestowed on the younger Margueron. Two days since, the Count, who wanted to have done with the matter, had sent for his notary Alexandre Crottat, and Derville his solicitor, to inquire into the state of the affair. Though Crottat and Derville cast doubts on the Steward's zeal—and, indeed, it was a puzzling letter from him that gave rise to this consultation—the Count defended Moreau, who had, he said, served him faithfully for seventeen years.

"Well," Derville replied, "I can only advise your lordship to go in person to Presles and ask this Margueron to dinner. Crottat will send down his head-clerk with a form of sale ready drawn out, leaving blank pages or lines for the insertion of descriptions of the plots and the necessary titles. Your Excellency will do well to go provided with a cheque for part of the purchase-money in case of need, and not to forget the letter appointing the son to the collectorship at Senlis. If you do not strike on the nail, the farm will slip through your fingers. You have no idea, Monsieur le Comte, of peasant cunning. Given a peasant on one side and a diplomate on the other, the peasant will win the day."

Crottat confirmed this advice, which, from the footman's report to Pierrotin, the Count had evidently adopted. On the day before, the Count had sent a note to Moreau by the Beaumont diligence, desiring him to invite Margueron to dinner, as he meant to come to some conclusion concerning the Moulineaux farm-lands.

Before all this, the Count had given orders for the restoration of the living-rooms at Presles, and Monsieur Grindot, a fashionable architect, went down there once a week. So, while treating for his acquisition, Monsieur de Sérizy proposed inspecting the works at the same time and the effect of the new decorations. He intended to give his wife a surprise by taking her to Presles, and the restoration of the château was a matter of pride to him. What event, then, could have happened, that the Count, who, only the day before, was intending to go overtly to Presles, should now wish to travel thither *incognito,* in Pierrotin's chaise?

Here a few words are necessary as to the antecedent history of the steward at Presles.

This man, Moreau, was the son of a proctor in a provincial town, who at the time of the Revolution had been made a magistrate (*procureur-syndic*) at Versailles. In this position the elder Moreau had been largely instrumental in saving the property and life of the Sérizys, father and son. Citizen Moreau had belonged to the party of Danton; Robespierre,

implacable in revenge, hunted him down, caught him, and had him executed at Versailles. The younger Moreau, inheriting his father's doctrines and attachments, got mixed up in one of the conspiracies plotted against the First Consul on his accession to power. Then Monsieur de Sérizy, anxious to pay a debt of gratitude, succeeded in effecting Moreau's escape after he was condemned to death; in 1804 he asked and obtained his pardon; he at first found him a place in his office, and afterwards made him his secretary and manager of his private affairs.

Some time after his patron's marriage, Moreau fell in love with the Countess' maid and married her. To avoid the unpleasantly false position in which he was placed by this union—and there were many such at the Imperial Court—he asked to be appointed land steward at Presles, where his wife could play the lady, and where, in a neighborhood of small folks, they would neither of them be hurt in their own conceits. The Count needed a faithful agent at Presles, because his wife preferred to reside at Sérizy, which is no more than five leagues from Paris. Moreau was familiar with all his affairs, and he was intelligent; before the Revolution he had studied law under his father. So Monsieur de Sérizy said to him:

"You will not make a fortune, for you have tied a millstone round your neck; but you will be well off, for I will provide for that."

And, in fact, the Count gave Moreau a fixed salary of a thousand crowns, and a pretty little lodge to live in beyond the outbuildings; he also allowed him so many cords of wood a year out of the plantations for fuel, so much straw, oats, and hay for two horses, and a certain proportion of the payments in kind. A sous-préfet is less well off.

During the first eight years of his stewardship, Moreau managed the estate conscientiously, and took an interest in his work. The Count, when he came down to inspect the domain, to decide on purchases or sanction improvements, was struck by Moreau's faithful service, and showed his approbation by handsome presents. But when Moreau found

himself the father of a girl—his third child—he was so completely established at his ease at Presles, that he forgot how greatly he was indebted to Monsieur de Sérizy for such unusually liberal advantages. Thus in 1816, the steward, who had hitherto done no more than help himself freely, accepted from a wood-merchant a bonus of twenty-five thousand francs, with the promise of a rise, for signing an agreement for twelve years allowing the contractor to cut fire-logs in the woods of Presles. Moreau argued thus: He had no promise of a pension; he was the father of a family; the Count certainly owed him so much by way of premium on nearly ten years' service. He was already lawfully possessed of sixty thousand francs in savings; with this sum added to it he could purchase for a hundred and twenty thousand a farm in the vicinity of Champagne, a hamlet on the right bank of the Oise a little way above l'Isle-Adam.

The stir of politics hindered the Count and the country-folks from taking cognizance of this investment; the business was indeed transacted in the name of Madame Moreau, who was supposed to have come into some money from an old great-aunt in her own part of the country, at Saint-Lô.

When once the steward had tasted the delicious fruits of ownership, though his conduct was still apparently honesty itself, he never missed an opportunity of adding to his clandestine wealth; the interests of his three children served as an emollient to quench the ardors of his honesty, and we must do him the justice to say that while he was open to a bribe, took care of himself in concluding a bargain, and strained his rights to the last point, he was still honest in the eye of the law; no proof could have been brought in support of any accusation. According to the jurisprudence of the least dishonest of Paris cooks, he shared with his master the profits due to his sharp practice. This way of making a fortune was a matter of conscience—nothing more. Energetic, and fully alive to the Count's interests, Moreau looked out all the more keenly for good opportunities of driving a bargain, since he was sure of a handsome douceur. Presles was worth sixty-two thousand francs in cash rents; and through-

out the district, for ten leagues round, the saying was, "Monsieur de Sérizy has a second self in Moreau!"

Moreau, like a prudent man, had, since 1817, invested his salary and his profits year by year in the funds, feathering his nest in absolute secrecy. He had refused various business speculations on the plea of want of money, and affected poverty so well to the Count that he had obtained two scholarships for his boys at the Collège Henri IV. And, at this moment, Moreau owned a hundred and twenty thousand francs in reduced consuls, then paying five per cent, and quoted at eighty. These unacknowledged hundred and twenty thousand francs, and his farm at Champagne, to which he had made additions, amounted to a fortune of about two hundred and eighty thousand francs, yielding an income of sixteen thousand francs a year.

This, then, was the steward's position at the time when the Count wished to purchase the farm of les Moulineaux, of which the possession had become indispensable to his comfort. This farm comprehended ninety-six plots of land, adjoining, bordering, and marching with the estate of Presles, in many cases indeed completely surrounded by the Count's property, like a square in the middle of a chess-board, to say nothing of the dividing hedges and ditches, which gave rise to constant disputes when a tree was to be cut down if it stood on debatable ground. Any other Minister of State would have fought twenty lawsuits a year over the lands of les Moulineaux.

Old Léger wanted to buy them only to sell to the Count; and to make the thirty or forty thousand francs of profit he hoped for, he had long been endeavoring to come to terms with Moreau. Only three days before this critical Saturday, farmer Léger, driven by press of circumstances, had, standing out in the fields, clearly demonstrated to the steward how he could invest the Comte de Sérizy's money at two and a half per cent in purchasing other plots, that is to say, could, as usual, seem to be serving the Count's interests while pocketing the bonus of forty thousand francs offered him on the transaction.

"And on my honor," said the steward to his wife as they went to bed that evening, "if I can make fifty thousand francs on the purchase of les Moulineaux—for the Count will give me ten thousand at least—we will retire to l'Isle-Adam to the Pavillon de Nogent."

This *pavillon* is a charming little house built for a lady by the Prince de Conti in a style of prodigal elegance.

"I should like that," said his wife. "The Dutchman who has been living there has done it up very handsomely, and he will let us have it for thirty thousand francs, since he is obliged to go back to the Indies."

"It is but a stone's throw from Champagne," Moreau went on. "I have hopes of being able to buy the farm and mill at Mours for a hundred thousand francs. We should thus have ten thousand francs a year out of land, one of the prettiest places in all the valley, close to our farm lands, and six thousand francs a year still in the funds."

"And why should you not apply to be appointed Justice of the Peace at l'Isle-Adam? It would give us importance and fifteen hundred francs a year more."

"Yes, I have thought of that."

In this frame of mind, on learning that his patron was coming to Presles, and wished him to invite Margueron to dinner on Saturday, Moreau at once sent off a messenger, who delivered a note to the Count's valet too late in the evening for it to be delivered to Monsieur de Sérizy; but Augustin laid it, as was usual, on his master's desk. In this letter Moreau begged the Count not to take so much trouble; to leave the matter to his management. By his account Margueron no longer wished to sell the lands in one lot, but talked of dividing the farm into ninety-six plots. This, at any rate, he must be persuaded to give up; and perhaps, said the steward, it might be necessary to find some one to lend his name as a screen.

Now, everybody has enemies. The steward of Presles and his wife had given offence to a retired officer named de Reybert and his wife. From stinging words and pin-pricks they

had come to daggers drawn. Monsieur de Reybert breathed nothing but vengeance; he aimed at getting Moreau deposed from his place and filling it himself. These two ideas are twins. Hence the agent's conduct, narrowly watched for two years past, had no secrets from the Reyberts. At the very time when Moreau was despatching his letter to Monsieur de Sérizy, Reybert had sent his wife to Paris. Madame de Reybert so strongly insisted on seeing the Count, that, being refused at nine in the evening, when he was going to bed, she was shown into his study by seven o'clock next morning.

"Monseigneur," said she to the Minister, "my husband and I are incapable of writing an anonymous letter. I am Madame de Reybert, *née* de Corroy. My husband has a pension of no more than six hundred francs a year, and we live at Presles, where your land-steward exposes us to insult upon insult though we are gentlefolks.—Monsieur de Reybert, who has no love of intrigue—far from it!—retired as a Captain of Artillery in 1816 after twenty years' service, but he never came under the Emperor's eye, Monsieur le Comte; and you must know how slowly promotion came to those who did not serve under the Master himself; and besides, my husband's honesty and plain speaking did not please his superiors.

"For three years my husband has been watching your steward for the purpose of depriving him of his place.—We are outspoken, you see. Moreau has made us his enemies, and we have kept our eyes open. I have come therefore to tell you that you are being tricked in this business of the Moulineaux farm lands. You are to be cheated of a hundred thousand francs, which will be shared between the notary, Léger, and Moreau. You have given orders that Margueron is to be asked to dinner, and you intend to go to Presles to-morrow; but Margueron will be ill, and Léger is so confident of getting the farm that he is in Paris realizing enough capital. As we have enlightened you, if you want an honest agent, engage my husband. Though of noble birth, he will serve you as he served his country. Your steward has made and saved two hundred and fifty thousand francs, so he is not to be pitied."

The Count thanked Madame de Reybert very coldly and answered her with empty speeches, for he detested an informer; still, as he remembered Derville's suspicions, he was shaken in his mind, and then his eye fell on Moreau's letter; he read it, and in those assurances of devotion, and the respectful remonstrances as to the want of confidence implied by his intention of conducting this business himself, he saw the truth about Moreau.

"Corruption has come with wealth, as usual," said he to himself.

He had questioned Madame de Reybert less to ascertain the details than to give himself time to study her, and he had then written a line to his notary to desire him not to send his clerk to Presles, but to go there himself and meet him at dinner.

"If you should have formed a bad opinion of me, Monsieur le Comte, for the step I have taken unknown to my husband," said Madame Reybert in conclusion, "you must at least be convinced that we have obtained our knowledge as concerning your steward by perfectly natural means; the most sensitive conscience can find nothing to blame us for."

Madame de Reybert *née* de Corroy held herself as straight as a pikestaff.

The Count's rapid survey took in a face pitted by the smallpox till it looked like a colander, a lean, flat figure, a pair of eager, light-colored eyes, fair curls flattened on an anxious brow, a faded green silk bonnet lined with pink, a white stuff dress with lilac spots, and kid shoes. Monsieur de Sérizy discerned in her the wife of the poor gentleman; some Puritanical soul subscribing to the *Courrier Français,* glowing with virtue, but very well aware of the advantages of a fixed place, and coveting it.

"A pension of six hundred francs, you said?" replied the Count, answering himself rather than Madame de Reybert's communication.

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte."

"You were a de Corroy?"

"Yes, monsieur, of a noble family of the Messin country, my husband's country."

"And in what regiment was Monsieur de Reybert?"

"In the 7th Artillery."

"Good!" said the Count, writing down the number.

He thought he might very well place the management of the estate in the hands of a retired officer, concerning whom he could get the fullest information at the War Office.

"Madame," he went on, ringing for his valet, "return to Presles with my notary, who is to arrange to dine there to-night, and to whom I have written a line of introduction; this is his address. I am going to Presles myself, but secretly, and will let Monsieur de Reybert know where to call on me."

So it was not a false alarm that had startled Pierrotin with the news of Monsieur de Sérizy's journey in a public chaise, and the warning to keep his name a secret; he foresaw imminent danger about to fall on one of his best customers.

On coming out of the café, Pierrotin perceived, at the gate of the *Silver Lion*, the woman and youth whom his acumen had recognized as travelers; for the lady, with outstretched neck and an anxious face, was evidently looking for him. This lady, in a re-dyed black silk, a gray bonnet, and an old French cashmere shawl, shod in open-work silk stockings and kid shoes, held a flat straw basket and a bright blue umbrella. She had once been handsome, and now looked about forty; and her blue eyes, bereft of the sparkle that happiness might have given them, showed that she had long since renounced the world. Her dress no less than her person betrayed a mother entirely given up to her housekeeping and her son. If the bonnet-strings were shabby, the shape of it dated from three years back. Her shawl was fastened with a large broken needle, converted into a pin by means of a head of sealing-wax.

This person was impatiently awaiting Pierrotin to commend her son to his care; the lad was probably traveling alone for the first time, and she had accompanied him as far as the

coach office, as much out of mistrust as out of motherly devotion. The son was in a way supplementary to his mother; and without the mother the son would have seemed less comprehensible. While the mother was content to display darned gloves, the son wore an olive-green overcoat, with sleeves rather short at the wrists, showing that he was still growing, as lads do between eighteen and nineteen. And his blue trousers, mended by the mother, showed that they had been new-seated whenever the tails of his coat parted maliciously behind.

"Do not twist your gloves up in that way," she was saying when Pierrotin appeared, "you wear them shabby.—Are you the driver?—Ah! it is you, Pierrotin!" she went on, leaving her son for a moment and taking the coachman aside.

"All well, Madame Clapart?" said Pierrotin, with an expression on his face of mingled respect and familiarity.

"Yes, Pierrotin. Take good care of my Oscar; he is traveling alone for the first time."

"Oh! if he is going alone to Monsieur Moreau's——?" said Pierrotin, to discover whether it were really there that the fellow was being sent.

"Yes," said the mother.

"Has Madame Moreau a liking for him, then?" said the man, with a knowing look.

"Oh! it will not be all roses for the poor boy; but his future prospects make it absolutely necessary that he should go."

Pierrotin was struck by this remark, and he did not like to confide his doubts concerning the steward to Madame Clapart; while she, on her part, dared not offend her son by giving Pierrotin such instructions as would put the coachman in the position of a mentor.

During this brief hesitation on both sides, under cover of a few remarks on the weather, the roads, the stopping places on the way, it will not be superfluous to explain the circumstances which had thrown Pierrotin and Madame Clapart together and given rise to their few words of confidential talk.

Frequently—that is to say, three or four times a month—Pierrotin, on his way to Paris, found the steward waiting at la Cave, and as the coach came up he beckoned to a gardener, who then helped Pierrotin to place on the coach one or two baskets full of such fruit and vegetables as were in season, with fowls, eggs, butter, or game. Moreau always paid the carriage himself, and gave him money enough to pay the excise duties at the barrier, if the baskets contained anything subject to the *octroi*. These hampers and baskets never bore any label. The first time, and once for all, the steward had given the shrewd driver Madame Clapart's address by word of mouth, desiring him never to trust anybody else with these precious parcels. Pierrotin, dreaming of an intrigue between some pretty girl and the agent, had gone as directed to No. 7 Rue de la Cerisaie, near the Arsenal, where he had seen the Madame Clapart above described, instead of the fair young creature he had expected to find.

Carriers, in the course of their day's work, are initiated into many homes and trusted with many secrets; but the chances of the social system—a sort of deputy providence—having ordained that they should have no education or be unendowed with the gift of observation, it follows that they are not dangerous. Nevertheless, after many months Pierrotin could not account to himself for the friendship between Madame Clapart and Monsieur Moreau, from what little he saw of the household in the Rue de la Cerisaie. Though rents were not at that time high in the neighborhood of the Arsenal, Madame Clapart lived on the third floor on the inner side of a courtyard, in a house which had been in its day the residence of some magnate, at a period when the highest nobility in the kingdom lived on what had been the site of the Palais des Tournelles and the Hôtel Saint-Paul. Towards the close of the sixteenth century the great families spread themselves over vast plots previously occupied by the King's Palace Gardens, of which the record survives in the names of the streets, Rue de la Cerisaie, Rue Beautreillis, Rue des Lions, and so on. This apartment, of which every room was

paneled with old wainscot, consisted of three rooms in a row —a dining-room, a drawing-room, and a bedroom. Above were the kitchen and Oscar's room. Fronting the door that opened on to the landing was the door of another room at an angle to these, in a sort of square tower of massive stone built out all the way up, and containing besides a wooden staircase. This tower room was where Moreau slept whenever he spent a night in Paris.

Pierrotin deposited the baskets in the first room, where he could see six straw-bottomed, walnut-wood chairs, a table, and a sideboard; narrow russet-brown curtains screened the windows. Afterwards, when he was admitted to the drawing-room, he found it fitted with old furniture of the time of the Empire, much worn; and there was no more of it at all than the landlord would insist upon as a guarantee for the rent. The carved panels, painted coarsely in distemper of a dull pinkinsh white, and in such a way as to fill up the mouldings and thicken the scrolls and figures, far from being ornamental, were positively depressing. The floor, which was never waxed, was as dingy as the boards of a schoolroom. If the carrier by chance disturbed Monsieur and Madame Clapart at a meal, the plates, the glasses, the most trifling things revealed miserable poverty; they had silver plate, it is true, but the dishes and tureen, chipped and riveted like those of the very poor, were truly pitiable. Monsieur Clapart, in a dirty short coat, with squalid slippers on his feet, and always green spectacles to protect his eyes, as he took off a horrible peaked cap, five years old at least, showed a high-pointed skull, with a few dirty locks hanging about it, which a poet would have declined to call hair. This colorless creature looked a coward, and was probably a tyrant.

In this dismal apartment, facing north, with no outlook but on a vine nailed out on the opposite wall, and a well in the corner of the yard, Madame Clapart gave herself the airs of a queen, and trod like a woman who could not go out on foot. Often, as she thanked Pierrotin, she would give him a look that might have touched the heart of a looker-on; now

and again she would slip a twelve-sou piece into his hand. Her voice in speech was very sweet. Oscar was unknown to Pierrotin, for the boy had but just left school, and he had never seen him at home.

This was the sad story which Pierrotin never could have guessed, not even after questioning the gate-keeper's wife, as he sometimes did—for the woman knew nothing beyond the fact that the Claparts' rent was but two hundred and fifty francs; that they only had a woman in to help for a few hours in the morning; that Madame would sometimes do her own little bit of washing, and paid for every letter as it came as if she were afraid to let the account stand.

There is no such thing—or rather, there is very rarely such a thing—as a criminal who is bad all through. How much more rare it must be to find a man who is dishonest all through! He may make up his accounts to his own advantage rather than his master's, or pull as much hay as possible to his end of the manger; but even while making a little fortune by illicit means, few men deny themselves the luxury of some good action. If only out of curiosity, as a contrast, or perhaps by chance, every man has known his hour of generosity; he may speak of it as a mistake, and never repeat it; still, once or twice in his life, he will have sacrificed to well-doing, as the veriest lout will sacrifice to the Graces. If Moreau's sins can be forgiven him, will it not be for the sake of his constancy in helping a poor woman of whose favors he had once been proud, and under whose roof he had found refuge in danger.

This woman, famous at the time of the Directoire for her connection with one of the five kings of the day, married, under his powerful patronage, a contractor, who made millions, and then was ruined by Napoleon in 1802. This man, named Husson, was driven mad by his sudden fall from opulence to poverty; he threw himself into the Seine, leaving his handsome wife expecting a child. Moreau, who was on very intimate terms with Madame Husson, was at the time under sentence of death, so he could not marry the widow, and

was in fact obliged to leave France for a time. Madame Husson, only two-and-twenty, in her utter poverty, married an official named Clapart, a young man of twenty-seven—a man of promise, it was said. Heaven preserve women from handsome men of promise! In those days officials rose rapidly from humble beginnings, for the Emperor had an eye for capable men. But Clapart, vulgarly handsome indeed, had no brains. Believing Madame Husson to be very rich, he had affected a great passion; he was simply a burden to her, never able, either then or later, to satisfy the habits she had acquired in her days of opulence. Clapart filled—badly enough—a small place in the Exchequer Office at a salary of not more than eighteen hundred francs a year.

When Moreau came back to be with the Comte de Sérizy and heard of Madame Husson's desperate plight, he succeeded, before his own marriage, in getting her a place as woman of the bedchamber in attendance on Madame, the Emperor's mother. But in spite of such powerful patronage, Clapart could never get on; his incapacity was too immediately obvious.

In 1815 the brilliant Aspasia of the Directory, ruined by the Emperor's overthrow, was left with nothing to live on but the salary of twelve hundred francs attached to a clerkship in the Municipal Offices, which the Comte de Sérizy's influence secured for Clapart. Moreau, now the only friend of a woman whom he had known as the possessor of millions, obtained for Oscar Husson a half-scholarship held by the Municipality of Paris in the Collège Henri IV., and he sent to the Rue de la Cerisaie, by Pierrotin, all he could decently offer to the impoverished lady.

Oscar was his mother's one hope, her very life. The only fault to be found with the poor woman was her excessive fondness for this boy—his stepfather's utter aversion. Oscar was, unluckily, gifted with a depth of silliness which his mother could never suspect, in spite of Clapart's ironical remarks. This silliness—or, to be accurate, this bumptiousness—disturbed Monsieur Moreau so greatly that he had

begged Madame Clapart to send the lad to him for a month that he might judge for himself what line of life he would prove fit for. The steward had some thought of introducing Oscar one day to the Count as his successor.

But, to give God and the Devil their due, it may here be observed as an excuse for Oscar's preposterous conceit, that he had been born under the roof of the Emperor's mother; in his earliest years his eyes had been dazzled by Imperial splendor. His impressible imagination had no doubt retained the memory of those magnificent spectacles, and an image of that golden time of festivities, with a dream of seeing them again. The boastfulness common to schoolboys, all possessed by desire to shine at the expense of their fellows, had in him been exaggerated by those memories of his childhood: and at home perhaps his mother was rather too apt to recall with complacency the days when she had been a queen of Paris under the Directory. Oscar, who had just finished his studies, had, no doubt, often been obliged to assert himself as superior to the humiliations which the pupils who pay are always ready to inflict on the "charity boys" when the scholars are not physically strong enough to impress them with their superiority.

This mixture of departed splendor and faded beauty, of affection resigned to poverty, of hope founded on this son, and maternal blindness, with the heroic endurance of suffering, made this mother one of the sublime figures which in Paris deserve the notice of the observer.

Pierrotin, who, of course, could not know how truly Moreau was attached to this woman, and she, on her part, to the man who had protected her in 1797, and was now her only friend, would not mention to her the suspicion that had dawned in his brain as to the danger which threatened Moreau. The manservant's ominous speech, "We have all enough to do to take care of ourselves," recurred to his mind with the instinct of obedience to those whom he designated as "first in the ranks." Also, at this moment Pierrotin felt as many darts

stinging his brain as there are five-franc pieces in a thousand francs. A journey of seven leagues seemed, no doubt, quite an undertaking to this poor mother, who in all her fine lady existence had hardly ever been beyond the barrier; for Pierrotin's replies, "Yes, madame; no, madame——" again and again, plainly showed that the man was only anxious to escape from her too numerous and useless instructions.

"You will put the luggage where it cannot get wet if the weather should change?"

"I have a tarpaulin," said Pierrotin; "and you see, madame, it is carefully packed away."

"Oscar, do not stay more than a fortnight, even if you are pressed," Madame Clapart went on, coming back to her son. "Do what you will, Madame Moreau will never take to you; besides, you must get home by the end of September. We are going to Belleville, you know, to your uncle Cardot's."

"Yes, mamma."

"Above all," she added in a low tone, "never talk about servants. Always remember that Madame Moreau was a lady's maid——"

"Yes, mamma."

Oscar, like all young people whose conceit is touchy, seemed much put out by these admonitions delivered in the gateway of the *Silver Lion*.

"Well, good-bye, mamma; we shall soon be off, the horse is put in."

The mother, forgetting that she was in the open street, hugged her Oscar, and taking a nice little roll out of her bag—

"Here," said she, "you were forgetting your bread and chocolate. Once more, my dear boy, do not eat anything at the inns; you have to pay ten times the value for the smallest morsel."

Oscar wished his mother further as she stuffed the roll and the chocolate into his pocket.

There were two witnesses to the scene, two young men a few years older than the newly fledged school-boy, better dressed than he, and come without their mothers, their

demeanor, dress, and manner proclaiming the entire independence which is the end of every lad's desire while still under direct maternal government. To Oscar, at this moment, these two young fellows epitomized the World.

"*Mamma!* says he," cried one of the strangers, with a laugh.

The words reached Oscar's ears, and in an impulse of intense irritation he shouted out:

"Good-bye, mother!"

It must be owned that Madame Clapart spoke rather too loud, and seemed to admit the passers-by to bear witness to her affectionate care.

"What on earth ails you, Oscar?" said the poor woman, much hurt. "I do not understand you," she added severely, fancying she could thus inspire him with respect—a common mistake with women who spoil their children. "Listen, dear Oscar," she went on, resuming her coaxing gentleness, "you have a propensity for talking to everybody, telling everything you know and everything you don't know—out of brag and a young man's foolish self-conceit. I beg you once more to bridle your tongue. You have not seen enough of life, my dearest treasure, to gauge the people you may meet, and there is nothing more dangerous than talking at random in a public conveyance. In a diligence well-bred persons keep silence."

The two young men, who had, no doubt, walked to the end of the yard and back, now made the sound of their boots heard once more under the gateway; they might have heard this little lecture; and so, to be quit of his mother, Oscar took heroic measures, showing how much self-esteem can stimulate the inventive powers.

"Mamma," said he, "you are standing in a thorough draught, you will catch cold. Besides, I must take my place."

The lad had touched some tender chord, for his mother clasped him in her arms as if he were starting on some long voyage, and saw him into the chaise with tears in her eyes.

"Do not forget to give five francs to the servants," said she. "And write to me at least three times in the course of

the fortnight. Behave discreetly, and remember all my instructions. You have enough linen to need none washed. And, above all, remember all Monsieur Moreau's kindness; listen to him as to a father, and follow his advice."

As he got into the chaise Oscar displayed a pair of blue stockings as his trousers slipped up, and the new seat to his trousers as his coat-tails parted. And the smile on the faces of the two young men, who did not fail to see these evidences of honorable poverty, was a fresh blow to Oscar's self-esteem.

"Oscar's place is No. 1," said Madame Clapart to Pierrotin. "Settle yourself into a corner," she went on, still gazing at her son with tender affection.

Oh! how much Oscar regretted his mother's beauty, spoilt by misfortune and sorrow, and the poverty and self-sacrifice that hindered her from being nicely dressed. One of the youngsters—the one who wore boots and spurs—nudged the other with his elbow to point out Oscar's mother, and the other twirled his moustache with an air, as much as to say, "A neat figure!"

"How am I to get rid of my mother?" thought Oscar, looking quite anxious.

"What is the matter?" said Madame Clapart.

Oscar pretended not to hear, the wretch! And perhaps, under the circumstances, Madame Clapart showed want of tact; but an absorbing passion is so selfish!

"Georges, do you like traveling with children?" asked one of the young men of his friend.

"Yes, if they are weaned, and are called Oscar, and have chocolate to eat, my dear Amaury."

These remarks were exchanged in an undertone, leaving Oscar free to hear or not to hear them. His manner would show the young man what he might venture on with the lad to amuse himself in the course of the journey. Oscar would not hear. He looked round to see whether his mother, who weighed on him like a nightmare, was still waiting; but, indeed, he knew she was too fond of him to have deserted him yet. He not only involuntarily compared his traveling com-

panion's dress with his own, but he also felt that his mother's costume counted for something as provoking the young men's mocking smile.

"If only they would go!" thought he.

Alas! Amaury had just said to Georges, as he struck the wheel of the chaise with his cane:

"And you are prepared to trust your future career on board this frail vessel?"

"Needs must!" replied Georges in a fateful tone.

Oscar heaved a sigh as he noted the youth's hat, cocked cavalierly over one ear to show a fine head of fair hair elaborately curled, while he, by his stepfather's orders, wore his black hair in a brush above his forehead, cut quite short like a soldier's. The vain boy's face was round and chubby, bright with the color of vigorous health; that of "Georges" was long, delicate, and pale. This young man had a broad brow, and his chest filled out a shawl-pattern waistcoat. As Oscar admired his tightly-fitting iron-gray trousers, and his overcoat, sitting closely to the figure, with Brandenburg braiding and oval buttons, he felt as if the romantic stranger, blessed with so many advantages, were making an unfair display of his superiority, just as an ugly woman is offended by the mere sight of a beauty. The ring of his spurred boot-heels, which the young man accentuated rather too much for Oscar's liking, went to the boy's heart. In short, Oscar was as uncomfortable in his clothes, home-made perhaps out of his stepfather's old ones, as the other enviable youth was satisfied in his.

"That fellow must have ten francs at least in his pocket," thought Oscar.

The stranger happening to turn round, what were Oscar's feelings when he discerned a gold chain about his neck—with a gold watch, no doubt, at the end of it.

Living in the Rue de la Cerisaie since 1815, taken to and from school on his holidays by his stepfather Clapart, Oscar had never had any standard of comparison but his mother's poverty-stricken household. Kept very strictly, by Moreau's advice, he rarely went to the play, and then aspired no higher

than to the *Ambigu Comique,* where little elegance met his gaze, even if the absorbed attention a boy devotes to the stage had allowed him to study the house. His stepfather still wore his watch in a fob in the fashion of the Empire, with a heavy gold chain hanging over his stomach, and ending in a bunch of miscellaneous objects—seals, and a watch-key with a flat round top, in which was set a landscape in mosaic. Oscar, who looked on this out-of-date splendor as the *ne plus ultra* of luxury, was quite bewildered by this revelation of superior and less ponderous elegance. The young man also made an insolent display of a pair of good gloves, and seemed bent on blinding Oscar by his graceful handling of a smart cane with a gold knob.

Oscar had just reached the final stage of boyhood in which trifles are the cause of great joys and great anguish, when a real misfortune seems preferable to a ridiculous costume; and vanity, having no great interests in life to absorb it, centres in frivolities, and dress, and the anxiety to be thought a man. The youth magnifies himself, and his self-assertion is all the more marked because it turns on trifles; still, though he envies a well-dressed noodle, he can be also fired with enthusiasm for talent, and admire a man of genius. His faults, when they are not rooted in his heart, only show the exuberance of vitality and a lavish imagination. When a boy of nineteen, an only son, austerely brought up at home as a result of the poverty that weighs so cruelly on a clerk with twelve hundred francs' salary, but worshiped by a mother, who for his sake endures the bitterest privations—when such a boy is dazzled by a youth of two-and-twenty, envies him his frogged coat lined with silk, his sham cashmere waistcoat, and a tie slipped through a vulgar ring, is not this a mere peccadillo such as may be seen in every class of life in the inferior who envies his betters?

Even a man of genius yields to this primitive passion. Did not Rousseau of Geneva envy Venture and Bacle?

But Oscar went on from the peccadillo to the real fault; he felt humiliated; he owed his traveling companion a grudge;

and a secret desire surged up in his heart to show him that he was as good a man as he.

The two young bucks walked to and fro, from the gateway to the stables and back, going out to the street; and as they turned on their heel, they each time looked at Oscar ensconced in his corner. Oscar, convinced that whenever they laughed it was at him, affected profound indifference. He began to hum the tune of a song then in fashion among the Liberals, *"C'est la faute à Voltaire, c'est la faute à Rousseau."* (It is all the fault of Voltaire and Rousseau.) This assumption, no doubt, made them take him for some underling lawyer's clerk.

"Why, perhaps he sings in the chorus at the Opera!" said Amaury.

Exasperated this time, Oscar bounded in his seat; raising the back curtain, he said to Pierrotin:

"When are we to be off?"

"Directly," said the man, who had his whip in his hand, but his eyes fixed on the Rue d'Enghien.

The scene was now enlivened by the arrival of a young man escorted by a perfect pickle of a boy, who appeared with a porter at their heels hauling a barrow by a strap. The young man spoke confidentially to Pierrotin, who wagged his head and hailed his stableman. The man hurried up to help unload the barrow, which contained, besides two trunks, pails, brushes, and boxes of strange shape, a mass of packets and utensils, which the younger of the two newcomers who had climbed to the box-seat stowed and packed away with such expedition that Oscar, smiling at his mother, who was now watching him from the other side of the street, failed to see any of the paraphernalia which might have explained to him in what profession his traveling companions were employed. This boy, about sixteen years of age, wore a holland blouse with a patent leather belt; his cap, knowingly stuck on one side, proclaimed him a merry youth, as did the picturesque disorder of his curly brown hair tumbling about his shoulders. A black silk tie marked a black line on a very white neck, and seemed to heighten the brightness of his gray eyes. The rest-

less vivacity of a sunburnt, rosy face, the shape of his full lips, his prominent ears, and his turn-up nose—every feature of his face showed the bantering wit of a Figaro and the recklessness of youth, while the quickness of his gestures and saucy glances revealed a keen intelligence, early developed by the practice of a profession taken up in boyhood. This boy, whom art or nature had already made a man, seemed indifferent to the question of dress, as though he were conscious of some intrinsic moral worth; for he looked at his unpolished boots as if he thought them rather a joke, and at his plain drill trousers to note the stains on them, but rather to study the effect than to hide them.

"I have acquired a fine tone!" said he, giving himself a shake, and addressing his companion.

The expression of the senior showed some authority over this youngster, in whom experienced eyes would at once have discerned the jolly art student, known in French studio slang as a *rapin*.

"Behave, Mistigris!" replied the master, calling him no doubt by a nickname bestowed on him in the studio.

The elder traveler was a slight and pallid young fellow, with immensely thick black hair in quite fantastic disorder; but this abundant hair seemed naturally necessary to a very large head with a powerful forehead that spoke of precocious intelligence. His curiously puckered face, too peculiar to be called ugly, was as hollow as though this singular young man were suffering either from some chronic malady or from the privations of extreme poverty—which is indeed a terrible chronic malady—or from sorrows too recent to have been forgotten.

His clothes, almost in keeping with those of Mistigris in proportion to his age and dignity, consisted of a much worn coat of a dull green color, shabby, but quite clean and well brushed, a black waistcoat buttoned to the neck, as the coat was too, only just showing a red handkerchief round his throat. Black trousers, as shabby as the coat, hung loosely round his lean legs. His boots were muddy, showing that

he had come far, and on foot. With one swift glance the artist took in the depths of the hostelry of the *Silver Lion,* the stables, the tones of color, and every detail, and he looked at Mistigris, who had imitated him, with an ironical twinkle.

"Rather nice!" said Mistigris.

"Yes, very nice," replied the other.

"We are still too early," said Mistigris. "Couldn't we snatch a toothful? My stomach, like nature, abhors a vacuum!"

"Have we time to get a cup of coffee?" said the artist, in a pleasant voice, to Pierrotin.

"Well, don't be long," said Pierrotin.

"We have a quarter of an hour," added Mistigris, thus revealing the genius for inference, which is characteristic of the Paris art student.

The couple disappeared. Just then nine o'clock struck in the inn kitchen. Georges thought it only fair and reasonable to appeal to Pierrotin.

"I say, my good friend, when you are the proud possessor of such a shandrydan as this," and he rapped the wheel with his cane, "you should at least make a merit of punctuality. The deuce is in it! we do not ride in that machine for our pleasure, and business must be devilish pressing before we trust our precious selves in it! And that old hack you call Rougeot will certainly not pick up lost time!"

"We will harness on Bichette while those two gentlemen are drinking their coffee," replied Pierrotin. "Go on, you," he added to the stableman, "and see if old Léger means to come with us——"

"Where is your old Léger?" asked Georges.

"Just opposite at Number 50; he couldn't find room in the Beaumont coach," said Pierrotin to his man, paying no heed to Georges, and going off himself in search of Bichette.

Georges shook hands with his friend and got into the chaise, after tossing in a large portfolio, with an air of much importance; this he placed under the cushion. He took the opposite corner to Oscar.

"This 'old Léger' bothers me,' said he.

"They cannot deprive us of our places," said Oscar. "Mine is No. 1."

"And mine No. 2," replied Georges.

Just as Pierrotin reappeared, leading Bichette, the stableman returned, having in tow a huge man weighing nearly seventeen stone at least.

Old Léger was of the class of farmer who, with an enormous stomach and broad shoulders, wears a powdered queue and a light coat of blue linen. His white gaiters were tightly strapped above the knee over corduroy breeches, and finished off with silver buckles. His hobnailed shoes weighed each a couple of pounds. In his hand he carried a little knotted red switch, very shiny, and with a heavy knob, secured round his wrist by a leather cord.

"And is it you who are known as old Léger?" (Farmer *Light*), said Georges gravely as the farmer tried to lift his foot to the step of the chaise.

"At your service," said the farmer, showing him a face rather like that of Louis XVIII., with a fat, red jowl, while above it rose a nose which in any other face would have seemed enormous. His twinkling eyes were deep set in rolls of fat.

"Come, lend a hand, my boy," said he to Pierrotin.

The farmer was hoisted in by the driver and the stableman to a shout of "Yo, heave ho!" from Georges.

"Oh! I am not going far; I am only going to la Cave!" said Farmer *Light,* answering a jest with good humor. In France everybody understands a joke.

"Get into the corner," said Pierrotin. "There will be six of you."

"And your other horse?" asked Georges. "Is it as fabulous as the third horse of a post-chaise?"

"There it is, master," said Pierrotin, pointing to the little mare that had come up without calling.

"He calls that insect a horse!" said Georges, astonished.

"Oh, she is a good one to go, is that little mare," said the farmer, who had taken his seat.—"Morning, gentlemen.—Are we going to weigh anchor, Pierrotin?"

"Two of my travelers are getting a cup of coffee," said the driver.

The young man with the hollow cheeks and his follower now reappeared.

"Come, let us get off," was now the universal cry.

"We are off—we are off!" replied Pierrotin. "Let her go," he added to his man, who kicked away the stones that scotched the wheels.

Pierrotin took hold of Rougeot's bridle with an encouraging *"Tclk, tclk,"* to warn the two steeds to pull themselves together; and, torpid as they evidently were, they started the vehicle, which Pierrotin brought to a standstill in front of the gate of the *Silver Lion*. After this purely preliminary manœuvre, he again looked down the Rue d'Enghien, and vanished, leaving the conveyance in the care of the stableman.

"Well! Is your governor subject to these attacks?" Mistigris asked of the man.

"He is gone to fetch his oats away from the stable," replied the Auvergnat, who was up to all the arts in use to pacify the impatience to travelers.

"After all," said Mistigris, *"time is a great plaster."*

At that time there was in the Paris studios a mania for distorting proverbs. It was considered a triumph to hit on some change of letters or some rhyming word which should suggest an absurd meaning, or even make it absolute nonsense.*

"And Paris was not gilt in a play," replied his comrade.

Pierrotin now returned, accompanied by the Comte de Sérizy, round the corner of the Rue de l'Echiquier; they had no doubt had a short conversation.

"Père Léger, would you mind giving your place up to Monsieur le Comte? It will trim the chaise better."

"And we shall not be off for an hour yet if you go on like this," said Georges. "You will have to take out that infernal bar we have had such plaguey trouble to fit in, and everybody will have to get out for the last comer. Each of us has a right

*To translate these not always funny jests is impossible. I have generally tried for no more than an equivalent rendering.—*Translator.*

to the place he booked. What number is this gentleman's?—Come, call them over. Have you a way-bill? Do you keep a book? Which is Monsieur le Comte's place?—Count of what?"

"Monsieur le Comte," said Pierrotin, visibly disturbed, "you will not be comfortable."

"Can't you count, man?" said Mistigris. "Short counts make tall friends."

"Mistigris, behave!" said his master quite seriously.

Monsieur de Sérizy was supposed by his fellow-travelers to be some respectable citizen called Lecomte.

"Do not disturb anybody," said the Count to Pierrotin; "I will sit in front by you."

"Now, Mistigris," said the young artist, "remember the respect due to age. You don't know how dreadfully old you may live to be. *Manners take the van.* Give your place up to the gentleman."

Mistigris opened the apron of the chaise, and jumped out as nimbly as a frog into the water.

"You cannot sit as *rabbit,* august old man!" said he to Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Mistigris, *Tarts are the end of man,*" said his master.

"Thank you, monsieur," said the Count to the artist, by whose side he now took his seat. And the statesman looked with a sagacious eye at the possessors of the back seat, in a way that deeply aggrieved Oscar and Georges.

"We are an hour and a quarter behind time," remarked Oscar.

"People who want a chaise to themselves should book all the places," added Georges.

The Comte de Sérizy, quite sure now that he was not recognized, made no reply, but sat with the expression of a good-natured tradesman.

"And if you had been late, you would have liked us to wait for you, I suppose?" said the farmer to the two young fellows.

Pierrotin was looking out towards the Porte Saint-Denis,

and paused for a moment before mounting to the hard box-seat, where Mistigris was kicking his heels.

"If you are still waiting for somebody, I am not the last," remarked the Count.

"That is sound reasoning," said Mistigris.

Georges and Oscar laughed very rudely.

"The old gentleman is not strikingly original," said Georges to Oscar, who was enchanted with this apparent alliance. When Pierrotin had settled himself in his place, he again looked back, but failed to discern in the crowd the two travelers who were wanting to fill up his cargo.

"By the Mass, but a couple more passengers would not come amiss," said he.

"Look here, I have not paid; I shall get out," said Georges in alarm.

"Why, whom do you expect, Pierrotin?" said Léger.

Pierrotin cried "Gee!" in a particular tone, which Rougeot and Bichette knew to mean business at last, and they trotted off towards the hill at a brisk pace, which, however, soon grew slack.

The Count had a very red face, quite scarlet indeed, with an inflamed spot here and there, and set off all the more by his perfectly white hair. By any but quite young men this complexion would have been understood as the inflammatory effect on the blood of incessant work. And, indeed, these angry pimples so much disfigured his really noble face, that only close inspection could discern in his greenish eyes all the acumen of the judge, the subtlety of the statesman, and the learning of the legislator. His face was somewhat flat; the nose especially looked as if it had been flattened. His hat hid the breadth and beauty of his brow; and, in fact, there was some justification for the laughter of these heedless lads, in the strange contrast between hair as white as silver and thick, bushy eyebrows still quite black. The Count, who wore a long, blue overcoat, buttoned to the chin in military fashion, had a white handkerchief round his neck, cotton-wool in his

ears, and a high shirt collar, showing a square white corner on each cheek. His black trousers covered his boots, of which the tip scarcely showed; he had no ribbon at his buttonhole, and his hands were hidden by his doeskin gloves. Certainly there was nothing in this man which could betray to the lads that he was a peer of France, and one of the most useful men living to his country.

Old Père Léger had never seen the Count, who, on the other hand, knew him only by name. Though the Count, as he got into the chaise, cast about him the inquiring glance which had so much annoyed Oscar and Georges, it was because he was looking for his notary's clerk, intending to impress on him the need for the greatest secrecy in case he should have been compelled to travel, like himself, by Pierrotin's conveyance. But he was reassured by Oscar's appearance and by that of the old farmer, and, above all, by the air of aping the military, with his moustache and his style generally, which stamped Georges an adventurer; and he concluded that his note had reached Maître Alexandre Crottat in good time.

"Père Léger," said Pierrotin as they came to the steep hill in the Faubourg Saint-Denis, at the Rue de la Fidélité, "suppose we were to walk a bit, heh?" On hearing the name, the Count observed:

"I will go out too; we must ease the horses."

"Oh! If you go on at this rate, we shall do fourteen leagues in a fortnight!" exclaimed Georges.

"Well, is it any fault of mine," said Pierrotin, "if a passenger wishes to get out?"

"I will give you ten louis if you keep my secret as I bid you," said the Count, taking Pierrotin by the arm.

"Oh, ho! My thousand francs!" thought Pierrotin, after giving Monsieur de Sérizy a wink, conveying, "Trust me!"

Oscar and Georges remained in the chaise.

"Look here, Pierrotin—since Pierrotin you are," cried Georges, when the travelers had got into the chaise again at the top of the hill, "if you are going no faster than this, say so. I will pay my fare to Saint-Denis, and hire a nag there,

for I have important business on hand, which will suffer from delay."

"Oh! he will get on, never fear," replied the farmer. "And the road is not a wide one."

"I am never more than half an hour late," answered Pierrotin.

"Well, well, you are not carting the Pope, I suppose," said Georges, "so hurry up a little."

"You ought not to show any favor," said Mistigris; "and if you are afraid of jolting this gentleman"—and he indicated the Count—"that is not fair."

"All men are equal in the eye of the *Coucou,*" said Georges, "as all Frenchmen are in the eye of the Charter."

"Be quite easy," said old Léger, "we shall be at la Chapelle yet before noon." La Chapelle is a village close to the Barrière Saint-Denis.

Those who have traveled know that persons thrown together in a public conveyance do not immediately amalgamate; unless under exceptional circumstances, they do not converse till they are well on their way. This silent interval is spent partly in reciprocal examination, and partly in finding each his own place and taking possession of it. The soul, as much as the body, needs to find its balance. When each severally supposes that he has made an accurate guess at his companion's age, profession, and temper, the most talkative first opens a conversation, which is taken up all the more eagerly, because all feel the need for cheering the way and dispelling the dulness.

This at least, is what happens in a French coach. In other countries manners are different. The English pride themselves on never opening their lips; a German is dull in a coach; Italians are too cautious to chat; the Spaniards have almost ceased to have any coaches; and the Russians have no roads. So it is only in the ponderous French diligence that the passengers amuse each other, in the gay and gossiping nation where each one is eager to laugh and display his humor, where everything is enlivened by raillery, from the

misery of the poorest to the solid interests of the upper middle-class. The police do little to check the license of speech, and the gallery of the Chambers has made discussion fashionable.

When a youngster of two-and-twenty, like the young gentleman who was known so far by the name of Georges, has a ready wit, he is strongly tempted, especially in such circumstances as these, to be reckless in the use of it. In the first place, Georges was not slow to come to the conclusion that he was the superior man of the party. He decided that the Count was a manufacturer of the second class, setting him down as a cutler; the shabby looking youth attended by Mistigris he thought but a greenhorn, Oscar a perfect simpleton, and the farmer a capital butt for a practical joke. Having thus taken the measure of all his traveling companions, he determined to amuse himself at their expense.

"Now," thought he, as the *coucou* rolled down the hill from la Chapelle towards the plain of Saint-Denis, "shall I pass myself off as Étienne, or as Béranger?—No, these bumpkins have never heard of either.—A Carbonaro? The Devil! I might be nabbed.—One of Marshal Ney's sons? Pooh, what could I make of that? Tell them the story of my father's death? That would hardly be funny.—Suppose I were to have come back from the Government colony in America? They might take me for a spy, and regard me with suspicion. —I will be a Russian Prince in disguise; I will cram them with fine stories about the Emperor Alexander!—Or if I pretended to be Cousin, the Professor of Philosophy? How I could mystify them! No, that limp creature with the towzled hair looks as if he might have kicked his heels at lecture at the Sorbonne.—Oh, why didn't I think sooner of trotting them out? I can imitate an Englishman so well, I might have been Lord Byron traveling *incog.*—Hang it! I have missed my chance.—The executioner's son? Not a bad way of clearing a space at breakfast.—Oh! I know! I will have been in command of the troops under Ali, the Pasha of Janina."

While he was lost in these meditations, the chaise was

making its way through the clouds of dust which constantly blow up from the side paths of this much-trodden road.

"What a dust!" said Mistigris.

"King Henri is dead," retorted his comrade. "If you said it smelt of vanilla now, you would hit on a new idea!"

"You think that funny," said Mistigris. "Well, but it does now and then remind me of vanilla."

"In the East——" Georges began, meaning to concoct a story.

"In the least——" said Mistigris' master, taking up Georges.

"In the East, I said, from whence I have just returned," Georges repeated, "the dust smells very sweet. But here it smells of nothing unless it is wafted up from such a manure-heap as this."

"You have just returned from the East?" said Mistigris, with a sly twinkle.

"And, you see, Mistigwis, the gentleman is so tired that what he now wequires is west," drawled his master.

"You are not much sunburnt," said Mistigris.

"Oh! I am but just out of bed after three months' illness, caused, the doctors say, by an attack of suppressed plague."

"You have had the plague?" cried the Count, with a look of horror.—"Pierrotin, put me out."

"Get on, Pierrotin," said Mistigris.—"You hear that the plague was suppressed," he went on, addressing Monsieur de Sérizy. "It was the sort of plague that goes down in the course of conversation."

"The plague of which one merely says, 'Plague take it!'" cried the artist.

"Or plague take the man!" added Mistigris.

"Mistigris," said his master, "I shall put you out to walk if you get into mischief.—So you have been in the East, monsieur?" he went on, turning to Georges.

"Yes, monsieur. First in Egypt and then in Greece, where I served under Ali Pasha of Janina, with whom I had a desperate row.—The climate is too much for most men; and the

excitements of all kinds that are part of an Oriental life wrecked my liver."

"Oh, ho! a soldier?" said the burly farmer. "Why, how old are you?"

"I am nine-and-twenty," said Georges, and all his fellow-travelers looked at him. "At eighteen I served as a private in the famous campaign of 1813; but I only was present at the battle of Hanau, where I won the rank of sergeant-major. In France, at Montereau, I was made sub-lieutenant, and I was decorated by—no spies here?—by the Emperor."

"And you do not wear the Cross of your Order?" said Oscar.

"A Cross given by the present set? Thank you for nothing. Besides, who that is anybody wears his decorations when traveling? Look at monsieur," he went on, indicating the Comte de Sérizy, "I will bet you anything you please——"

"Betting anything you please is the same thing in France as not betting at all," said Mistigris' master.

"I will bet you anything you please," Georges repeated pompously, "that he is covered with stars."

"I have, in fact," said Monsieur de Sérizy, with a laugh, "the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, the Grand Cross of Saint-Andrew of Russia, of the Eagle of Prussia, of the Order of the Annunciada of Sardinia, and of the Golden Fleece."

"Is that all?" said Mistigris. "And it all rides in a public chaise?"

"He is going it, is the brick-red man!" said Georges in a whisper to Oscar. "What did I tell you?" he remarked aloud. —"I make no secret of it, I am devoted to the Emperor!"

"I served under him," said the Count.

"And what a man! Wasn't he?" cried Georges.

"A man to whom I am under great obligations," replied the Count, with a well-affected air of stupidity.

"For your crosses?" said Mistigris.

"And what quantities of snuff he took!" replied Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Yes, he took it loose in his waistcoat pockets."

"So I have been told," said the farmer, with a look of incredulity.

"And not only that, but he chewed and smoked," Georges went on. "I saw him smoking in the oddest way at Waterloo when Marshal Soult lifted him up bodily and flung him into his traveling carriage, just as he had seized a musket and wanted to charge the English!"

"So you were at Waterloo?" said Oscar, opening his eyes very wide.

"Yes, young man, I went through the campaign of 1815. At Mont Saint-Jean I was made captain, and I retired on the Loire when we were disbanded. But, on my honor, I was sick of France, and I could not stay. No, I should have got myself into some scrape. So I went off with two or three others of the same sort, Selves, Besson, and some more, who are in Egypt to this day in the service of Mohammed Pasha, and a queer fellow he is, I can tell you! He was a tobacconist at la Cavalle, and is on the high way to be a reigning prince. You have seen him in Horace Vernet's picture of the *Massacre of the Mamelukes*. Such a handsome man!—I never would abjure the faith of my fathers and adopt Islam; all the more because the ceremony involves a surgical operation for which I had no liking. Besides, no one respects a renegade. If they had offered me a hundred thousand francs a year, then, indeed—and yet, no.—The Pasha made me a present of a thousand *talari*."

"How much is that?" asked Oscar, who was all ears.

"Oh, no great matter. The talaro is much the same as a five-franc piece. And, on my honor, I did not earn enough to pay for the vices I learned in that thundering vile country—if you can call it a country. I cannot live now without smoking my narghileh twice a day, and it is very expensive——"

"And what is Egypt like?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Egypt is all sand," replied Georges, quite undaunted. "There is nothing green but the Nile valley. Draw a green strip on a sheet of yellow paper, and there you have Egypt.—

The Egyptians, the fellaheen, have, I may remark, one great advantage over us; there are no gendarmes. You may go from one end of Egypt to the other, and you will not find one."

"I suppose there are a good many Egyptians there," said Mistigris.

"Not so many as you would think," answered Georges. "There are more Abyssinians, Giaours, Vechabites, Bedouins, and Copts.—However, all these creatures are so very far from amusing that I was only too glad to embark on a Genoese polacra, bound for the Ionian Islands to take up powder and ammunition for Ali of Tebelen. As you know, the English sell powder and ammunition to all nations, to the Turks and the Greeks; they would sell them to the Devil if the Devil had money. So from Zante we were to luff up to the coast of Greece.

"And, I tell you, take me as you see me, the name of Georges is famous in those parts. I am the grandson of that famous Czerni-Georges who made war on the Porte; but instead of breaking it down, he was unluckily smashed up. His son took refuge in the house of the French Consul at Smyrna, and came to Paris in 1792, where he died before I, his seventh child, was born. Our treasure was stolen from us by a friend of my grandfather's, so we were ruined. My mother lived by selling her diamonds one by one, till in 1799 she married Monsieur Yung, a contractor, and my stepfather. But my mother died; I quarreled with my stepfather, who, between ourselves, is a rascal; he is still living, but we never meet. The wretch left us all seven to our fate without a word, nor bit nor sup. And that is how, in 1813, in sheer despair, I went off as a conscript.—You cannot imagine with what joy Ali of Tebelen hailed the grandson of Czerni-Georges. Here I call myself simply Georges.—The Pasha gave me a seraglio——"

"You had a seraglio?" said Oscar.

"Were you a Pasha with many tails?" asked Mistigris.

"How is it that you don't know that there is but one Sultan who can create pashas?" said Georges, "and my friend

Tebelen—for we were friends, like two Bourbons—was a rebel against the Padischah.—You know—or you don't know—that the Grand Signor's correct title is Padischah, and not the Grand Turk or the Sultan.

"Do not suppose that a seraglio is any great matter. You might just as well have a flock of goats. Their women are great fools, and I like the grisettes of the *Chaumière* at Mont Parnasse a thousand times better."

"And they are much nearer," said the Comte de Sérizy.

"These women of the seraglio never know a word of French, and language is indispensable to an understanding. Ali gave me five lawful wives and ten slave girls. At Janina that was a mere nothing. In the East, you see, it is very bad style to have wives; you have them, but as we here have our Voltaire and our Rousseau; who ever looks into his Voltaire or his Rousseau? Nobody.—And yet it is quite the right thing to be jealous. You may tie a woman up in a sack and throw her into the water on a mere suspicion by an article of their Code."

"Did you throw any in?"

"I? What! a Frenchman! I was devoted to them."

Whereupon Georges twirled up his moustache, and assumed a pensive air.

By this time they were at Saint-Denis, and Pierrotin drew up at the door of the inn where the famous cheese-cakes are sold, and where all travelers call. The Count, really puzzled by the mixture of truth and nonsense in Georges' rhodomontade, jumped into the carriage again, looked under the cushion for the portfolio which Pierrotin had told him that this mysterious youth had bestowed there, and saw on it in gilt letters the words, "Maître Crottat, Notaire." The Count at once took the liberty of opening the case, fearing, with good reason, that if he did not, farmer Léger might be possessed with similar curiosity; and taking out the deed relating to the Moulineaux farm, he folded it up, put it in the side pocket of his coat, and came back to join his fellow-travelers.

"This Georges is neither more nor less than Crottat's junior clerk. I will congratulate his master, who ought to have sent his head-clerk."

From the respectful attention of the farmer and Oscar, Georges perceived that in them at least he had two ardent admirers. Of course, he put on lordly airs; he treated them to cheese-cakes and a glass of Alicante, and then did the same to Mistigris and his master, asking them their names on the strength of this munificence.

"Oh, monsieur," said the elder, "I am not the proud owner of so illustrious a name as yours, and I have not come home from Asia." The Count, who had made haste to get back to the vast inn kitchen, so as to excite no suspicions, came in time to hear the end of the reply.—"I am simply a poor painter just returned from Rome, where I went at the expense of the Government after winning the Grand Prix five years ago. My name is Schinner."

"Hallo, master, may I offer you a glass of Alicante and some cheese-cakes?" cried Georges to the Count.

"Thank you, no," said the Count. "I never come out till I have had my cup of coffee."

"And you never eat anything between meals? How *Marais, Place Royale,* and *Ile Saint-Louis!*" exclaimed Georges. "When he crammed us just now about his Orders, I fancied him better fun than he is," he went on in a low voice to the painter; "but we will get him on to that subject again—the little tallow-chandler.—Come, boy," said he to Oscar, "drink the glass that was poured out for the grocer, it will make your moustache grow."

Oscar, anxious to play the man, drank the second glass of wine, and ate three more cheese-cakes.

"Very good wine it is!" said old Léger, smacking his tongue.

"And all the better," remarked Georges, "because it comes from Bercy. I have been to Alicante, and, I tell you, this is no more like the wine of that country than my arm is like a windmill. Our manufactured wines are far better than the natural products.—Come, Pierrotin, have a glass. What a pity it is that your horses cannot each drink one; we should get on faster!"

"Oh, that is unnecessary, as I have a gray horse already," said Pierrotin (*gris,* which means gray, meaning also *screwed*).

Oscar, as he heard the vulgar pun, thought Pierrotin a marvel of wit.

"Off!" cried Pierrotin, cracking his whip as soon as the passengers had once more packed themselves into the vehicle.

It was by this time eleven o'clock. The weather, which had been rather dull, now cleared; the wind swept away the clouds; the blue sky shone out here and there; and by the time Pierrotin's chaise was fairly started on the ribbon of road between Saint-Denis and Pierrefitte, the sun had finally drunk up the last filmy haze that hung like a diaphanous veil over the views from this famous suburb.

"Well, and why did you throw over your friend the Pasha?" said the farmer to Georges.

"He was a very queer customer," replied Georges, with an air of hiding many mysteries. "Only think, he put me in command of his cavalry! Very well——"

"That," thought poor Oscar, "is why he wears spurs."

"At that time, Ali of Tebelen wanted to rid himself of Chosrew Pasha, another queer fish.—Chaureff you call him here, but in Turkey they call him Cosserev. You must have read in the papers at the time that old Ali had beaten Chosrew, and pretty soundly too. Well, but for me, Ali would have been done for some days sooner. I led the right wing, and I saw Chosrew, the old sneak, just charging the centre—oh, yes, I can tell you, as straight and steady a move as if he had been Murat.—Good! I took my time, and I charged at full speed, cutting Chosrew's column in two parts, for he had pushed through our centre, and had no cover. You understand——

"After it was all over Ali fairly hugged me."

"Is that the custom in the East?" said the Comte de Sérizy, with a touch of irony.

"Yes, monsieur, as it is everywhere," answered the painter.

"We drove Chosrew back over thirty leagues of country—

like a hunt, I tell you," Georges went on. "Splendid horsemen are the Turks. Ali gave me yataghans, guns, and swords.—'Take as many as you like.'—When we got back to the capital, that incredible creature made proposals to me that did not suit my views at all. He wanted to adopt me as his favorite, his heir. But I had had enough of the life; for, after all, Ali of Tebelen was a rebel against the Porte, and I thought it wiser to clear out. But I must do Monsieur de Tebelen justice, he loaded me with presents; diamonds, ten thousand talari, a thousand pieces of gold, a fair Greek girl for a page, a little Arnaute maid for company, and an Arab horse. Well, there! Ali, the Pasha of Janina, is an unappreciated man; he lacks a historian.—Nowhere but in the East do you meet with these iron souls who, for twenty years, strain every nerve, only to be able to take a revenge one fine morning.

"In the first place, he had the grandest white beard you ever saw, and a hard, stern face——"

"But what became of your treasure?" asked the farmer.

"Ah! there you are! Those people have no State funds nor Bank of France; so I packed my money-bags on board a Greek tartane, which was captured by the Capitan-Pasha himself. Then I myself, as you see me, was within an ace of being impaled at Smyrna. Yes, on my honor, but for Monsieur de Rivière, the Ambassador, who happened to be on the spot, I should have been executed as an ally of Ali Pasha's. I saved my head, or I could not speak so plainly; but as for the ten thousand talari, the thousand pieces of gold, and the weapons, oh! that was all swallowed down by that greedy-guts the Capitan-Pasha. My position was all the more ticklish because the Capitan-Pasha was Chosrew himself. After the dressing he had had, the scamp had got this post, which is that of High Admiral in France."

"But he had been in the cavalry, as I understood?" said old Léger, who had been listening attentively to this long story.

"That shows how little the East is understood in the De-

partment of Seine-et-Oise!" exclaimed Georges. "Monsieur, the Turks are like that.—You are a farmer, the Padischah makes you a Field-Marshal; if you do not fulfil your duties to his satisfaction, so much the worse for you. Off with your head! That is his way of dismissing you. A gardener is made préfet, and a prime minister is a private once more. The Ottomans know no laws of promotion or hierarchy.—Chosrew, who had been a horseman, was now a sailor. The Padischah Mohammed had instructed him to fall on Ali by sea; and he had, in fact, mastered him, but only by the help of the English, who got the best of the booty, the thieves! They laid hands on the treasure.

"This Chosrew, who had not forgotten the riding-lesson I had given him, recognized me at once. As you may suppose, I was settled—oh! done for!—if it had not occurred to me to appeal, as a Frenchman and a Troubadour, to Monsieur de Rivière. The Ambassador, delighted to assert himself, demanded my release. The Turks have this great merit, they are as ready to let you go as to cut off your head; they are indifferent to everything. The French consul, a charming man, and a friend of Chosrew's, got him to restore two thousand talari, and his name, I may say, is graven on my heart——"

"And his name——?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

He could not forbear a look of surprise when Georges, in fact, mentioned the name of one of our most distinguished Consuls-General, who was at Smyrna at the time.

"I was present, as it fell out, at the execution of the Commandant of Smyrna, the Padischah having ordered Chosrew to put him to death—one of the most curious things I ever saw, though I have seen many. I will tell you all about it by and by at breakfast.

"From Smyrna I went to Spain, on hearing there was a revolution there. I went straight to Mina, who took me for an aide-de-camp, and gave me the rank of Colonel. So I fought for the Constitutional party, which is going to the dogs, for we shall walk into Spain one of these days.' '

"And you a French officer!" said the Comte de Sérizy severely. "You are trusting very rashly to the discretion of your hearers."

"There are no spies among them," said Georges.

"And does it not occur to you, Colonel Georges," said the Count, "that at this very time a conspiracy is being inquired into by the Chamber of Peers, which makes the Government very strict in its dealings with soldiers who bear arms against France, or who aid in intrigues abroad tending to the overthrow of any legitimate sovereign?"

At this ominous remark, the painter reddened up to his ears, and glanced at Mistigris, who was speechless.

"Well, and what then?" asked old Léger.

"Why, if I by chance were a magistrate, would it not be my duty to call on the gendarmes of the Brigade at Pierrefitte to arrest Mina's aide-de-camp," said the Count, "and to summons all who are in this chaise as witnesses?"

This speech silenced Georges all the more effectually because the vehicle was just passing the Gendarmerie Station, where the white flag was, to use a classical phrase, floating on the breeze.

"You have too many Orders to be guilty of such mean conduct," said Oscar.

"We will play him a trick yet," whispered Georges to Oscar.

"Colonel," said Léger, very much discomfited by the Count's outburst, and anxious to change the subject, "in the countries where you have traveled, what is the farming like? What are their crops in rotation?"

"In the first place, my good friend, you must understand that the people are too busy smoking weeds to burn them on the land——"

The Count could not help smiling, and his smile reassured the narrator.

"And they have a way of cultivating the land which you will think strange. They do not cultivate it all; that is their system. The Turks and Greeks eat onions or rice; they collect opium from their poppies, which yields a large revenue,

and tobacco grows almost wild—their famous Latakia. Then there are dates, bunches of sugar-plums, that grow without any trouble. It is a country of endless resources and trade. Quantities of carpets are made at Smyrna, and not dear."

"Ay," said the farmer, "but if the carpets are made of wool, wool comes from sheep; and to have sheep they must have fields, farms, and farming——"

"There must, no doubt, be something of the kind," replied Georges. "But rice, in the first place, grows in water; and then I have always been near the coast, and have only seen the country devastated by war. Besides, I have a perfect horror of statistics."

"And the taxes?" said the farmer.

"Ah! the taxes are heavy. The people are robbed of everything, and allowed to keep the rest. The Pasha of Egypt, struck by the merits of this system, was organizing the Administration on that basis when I left."

"But how?" said old Léger, who was utterly puzzled.

"How?" echoed Georges. "There are collectors who seize the crops, leaving the peasants just enough to live on. And by that system there is no trouble with papers and red tape, the plague of France.—There you are!"

"But what right have they to do it?" asked the farmer.

"It is the land of despotism, that's all. Did you never hear Montesquieu's fine definition of Despotism—'Like the savage, it cuts the tree down to gather the fruit.' "

"And that is what they want to bring us back to!" cried Mistigris. "But a burnt rat dreads the mire."

"And it is what we shall come to," exclaimed the Comte de Sérizy. "Those who hold land will be wise to sell it. Monsieur Schinner must have seen how such things are done in Italy."

"*Corpo di Bacco!* The Pope is not behind his times. But they are used to it there. The Italians are such good people! So long as they are allowed to do a little highway murdering of travelers, they are quite content."

"But you, too, do not wear the ribbon of the Legion of

Honor that was given you in 1819," remarked the Count. "Is the fashion universal?"

Mistigris and the false Schinner reddened up to their hair.

"Oh, with me it is different," replied Schinner. "I do not wish to be recognized. Do not betray me, monsieur. I mean to pass for a quite unimportant painter; in fact, a mere decorator. I am going to a gentleman's house where I am anxious to excite no suspicion."

"Oh, ho!" said the Count, "a lady! a love affair!—How happy you are to be young!"

Oscar, who was bursting in his skin with envy at being nobody and having nothing to say, looked from Colonel Czerni-Georges to Schinner the great artist, wondering whether he could not make something of himself. But what could he be, a boy of nineteen, packed off to spend a fortnight or three weeks in the country with the steward of Presles? The Alicante had gone to his head, and his conceit was making the blood boil in his veins. Thus, when the sham Schinner seemed to hint at some romantic adventure of which the joys must be equal to the danger, he gazed at him with eyes flashing with rage and envy.

"Ah!" said the Count, with a look half of envy and half of incredulity, "you must love a woman very much to make such sacrifices for her sake."

"What sacrifices?" asked Mistigris.

"Don't you know, my little friend, that a ceiling painted by so great a master is covered with gold in payment?" replied the Count. "Why, if the Civil List pays you thirty thousand francs for those of the two rooms in the Louvre," he went on, turning to Schinner, "you would certainly charge a humble individual, a *bourgeois,* as you call us in your studios, twenty thousand for a ceiling, while an unknown decorator would hardly get two thousand francs."

"The money loss is not the worst of it," replied Mistigris. "You must consider that it will be a masterpiece, and that he must not sign it for fear of compromising *her.*"

"Ah! I would gladly restore all my orders to the sovereigns

of Europe to be loved as a young man must be, to be moved to such devotion!" cried Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Ay, there you are," said Mistigris. "A man who is young is beloved of many women; and, as the saying goes, there is safety in grumblers."

"And what does Madame Schinner say to it?" asked the Count, "for you married for love the charming Adélaïde de Rouville, the niece of old Admiral Kergarouët, who got you the work at the Louvre, I believe, through the interest of his nephew the Comte de Fontaine."

"Is a painter ever a married man when he is traveling?" asked Mistigris.

"That, then, is Studio morality?" exclaimed the Count in an idiotic way.

"Is the morality of the Courts where you got your Orders any better?" said Schinner, who had recovered his presence of mind, which had deserted him for a moment when he heard that the Count was so well informed as to the commission given to the real Schinner.

"I never asked for one," replied the Count. "I flatter myself that they were all honestly earned."

"And it becomes you like a pig in dress-boots," said Mistigris.

Monsieur de Sérizy would not betray himself; he put on an air of stupid good-nature as he looked out over the valley of Groslay, into which they diverged where the roads fork, taking the road to Saint-Brice, and leaving that to Chantilly on their right.

"Ay, take that!" said Oscar between his teeth.

"And is Rome as fine as it is said to be?" Georges asked of the painter.

"Rome is fine only to those who love it; you must have a passion for it to be happy there; but, as a town, I prefer Venice, though I was near being assassinated there."

"My word! But for me," said Mistigris, "your goose would have been cooked! It was that rascal Lord Byron who played

you that trick. That devil of an Englishman was as mad as a hatter!"

"Hold your tongue," said Schinner. "I won't have anything known of my affair with Lord Byron."

"But you must confess," said Mistigris, "that you were very glad that I had learned to 'box' in our French fashion?"

Now and again Pierrotin and the Count exchanged significant glances, which would have disturbed men a little more worldly-wise than these five fellow-travelers.

"Lords and pashas, and ceilings worth thirty thousand francs! Bless me!" cried the l'Isle-Adam carrier, "I have crowned heads on board to-day. What handsome tips I shall get!"

"To say nothing of the places being paid for," said Mistigris slily.

"It comes in the nick of time," Pierrotin went on. "For, you know, my fine new coach, Père Léger, for which I paid two thousand francs on account—well, those swindling coach-builders, to whom I am to pay two thousand five hundred francs to-morrow, would not take fifteen hundred francs down and a bill for a thousand at two months.—The vultures insist on it all in ready money. Fancy being as hard as that on a man who has traveled this road for eight years, the father of a family, and putting him in danger of losing everything, money and coach both, for lack of a wretched sum of a thousand francs!—Gee up, Bichette.—They would not dare do it to one of the big companies, I lay a wager."

"Bless me! No thong, no crupper!" said the student.

"You have only eight hundred francs to seek," replied the Count, understanding that this speech addressed to the farmer was a sort of bill drawn on himself.

"That's true," said Pierrotin. "Come up, Rougeot!"

"You must have seen some fine-painted ceilings at Venice," said the Count, speaking to Schinner.

"I was too desperately in love to pay any attention to what at the time seemed to me mere trifles," replied Schinner. "And yet I might have been cured of love-affairs; for in the

Venetian States themselves, in Dalmatia, I had just had a sharp lesson."

"Can you tell the tale?" asked Georges. "I know Dalmatia."

"Well, then, if you have been there, you know, of course, that up in that corner of the Adriatic they are all old pirates, outlaws, and corsairs retired from business, when they have escaped hanging, all——"

"Uscoques, in short," said Georges.

On hearing this, the right name, the Count, whom Napoleon had sent into the provinces of Illyria, looked sharply round, so much was he astonished.

"It was in the town where the Maraschino is made," said Schinner, seeming to try to remember a name.

"Zara," said Georges. "Yes, I have been there; it is on the coast."

"You have hit it," said the painter. "I went there to see the country, for I have a passion for landscape. Twenty times have I made up my mind to try landscape painting, which no one understands, in my opinion, but Mistigris, who will one of these days be a Hobbema, Ruysdael, Claude Lorraine, Poussin, and all the tribe in one."

"Well," exclaimed the Count, "if he is but one of them, he will do."

"If you interrupt so often, we shall never know where we are."

"Besides, our friend here is not speaking to you," added Georges to the Count.

"It is not good manners to interrupt," said Mistigris sententiously. "However, we did the same; and we should all be the losers if we didn't diversify the conversation by an exchange of reflections. All Frenchmen are equal in a public chaise, as the grandson of Czerni-Georges told us.—So pray go on, delightful old man, more of your bunkum. It is quite the correct thing in the best society; and you know the saying, Do in Turkey as the Turkeys do."

"I had heard wonders of Dalmatia," Schinner went on. "So off I went, leaving Mistigris at the inn at Venice."

"At the *locanda,*" said Mistigris; "put in the local color."

"Zara is, as I have been told, a vile hole——"

"Yes," said Georges; "but it is fortified."

"I should say so!" replied Schinner, "and the fortifications are an important feature in my story. At Zara there are a great many apothecaries, and I lodged with one of them. In foreign countries the principal business of every native is to let lodgings, his trade is purely accessory.

"In the evening, when I had changed my shirt, I went out on my balcony. Now on the opposite balcony I perceived a woman—oh! But a woman! A Greek; that says everything, the loveliest creature in all the town. Almond eyes, eyelids that came down over them like blinds, and lashes like paint-brushes; an oval face that might have turned Raphael's brain, a complexion of exquisite hue, melting tones, a skin of velvet, —hands—oh!"

"And not moulded in butter like those of David's school," said Mistigris.

"You insist on talking like a painter!" cried Georges.

"There, you see! drive nature out with a pitchfork and it comes back in a paint-box," replied Mistigris.

"And her costume—a genuine Greek costume," Schinner went on. "As you may suppose, I was in flames. I questioned my Diafoirus, and he informed me that my fair neighbor's name was Zéna. I changed my shirt. To marry Zéna, her husband, an old villain, had paid her parents three hundred thousand francs, the girl's beauty was so famous; and she really was the loveliest creature in all Dalmatia, Illyria, and the Adriatic.—In that part of the world you buy your wife, and without having seen her——"

"I will not go there," said old Léger.

"My sleep, some nights, is illuminated by Zéna's eyes," said Schinner. "Her adoring young husband was sixty-seven. Good! But he was as jealous—not as a tiger, for they say a tiger is as jealous as a Dalmatian, and my man was worse

than a Dalmatian; he was equal to three Dalmatians and a half. He was an Uscoque, a turkey-cock, a high cockalorum game-cock!"

"In short, the worthy hero of a cock-and-bull story," said Mistigris.

"Good for you!" replied Georges, laughing.

"After being a corsair, and perhaps a pirate, my man thought no more of spitting a Christian than I do of spitting out of window," Schinner went on. "A pretty lookout for me. And rich—rolling in millions, the old villain! And as ugly as a pirate may be, for some Pasha had wanted his ears, and he had dropped an eye somewhere on his travels. But my Uscoque made good use of the one he had, and you may take my word for it when I tell you he had eyes all round his head. 'Never does he let his wife out of his sight,' said my little Diafoirus.—'If she should require your services, I would take your place in disguise,' said I. 'It is a trick that is very successful in our stage-plays.'—It would take too long to describe the most delightful period of my life, three days, to wit, that I spent at my window ogling Zéna, and putting on a clean shirt every morning. The situation was all the more ticklish and exciting because the least gesture bore some dangerous meaning. Finally, Zéna, no doubt, came to the conclusion that in all the world none but a foreigner, a Frenchman, and an artist would be capable of making eyes at her in the midst of the perils that surrounded him; so, as she execrated her hideous pirate, she responded to my gaze with glances that were enough to lift a man into the vault of Paradise without any need of pulleys. I was screwed up higher and higher! I was tuned to the pitch of Don Quixote. At last I exclaimed, 'Well, the old wretch may kill me, but here goes!'—Not a landscape did I study; I was studying my corsair's lair. At night, having put on my most highly scented clean shirt, I crossed the street and I went in——"

"Into the house?" said Oscar.

"Into the house?" said Georges.

"Into the house," repeated Schinner.

"Well! you are as bold as brass!" cried the farmer. "I wouldn't have gone, that's all I can say——"

"With all the more reason that you would have stuck in the door," replied Schinner. "Well, I went in," he continued, "and I felt two hands which took hold of mine. I said nothing; for those hands, as smooth as the skin of an onion, impressed silence on me. A whisper in my ear said in Venetian, 'He is asleep.' Then, being sure that no one would meet us, Zéna and I went out on the ramparts for an airing, but escorted, if you please, by an old duenna as ugly as sin, who stuck to us like a shadow; and I could not induce Madame la Pirate to dismiss this ridiculous attendant.

"Next evening we did the same; I wanted to send the old woman home; Zéna refused. As my fair one spoke Greek, and I spoke Venetian, we could come to no understanding—we parted in anger. Said I to myself, as I changed my shirt, 'Next time surely there will be no old woman, and we can make friends again, each in our mother tongue.'—Well, and it was the old woman that saved me, as you shall hear.—It was so fine that, to divert suspicion, I went out to look about me, after we had made it up, of course. After walking round the ramparts, I was coming quietly home with my hands in my pockets when I saw the street packed full of people. Such a crowd!—as if there was an execution. This crowd rushed at me. I was arrested, handcuffed, and led off in charge of the police. No, you cannot imagine, and I hope you may never know, what it is to be supposed to be a murderer by a frenzied mob, throwing stones at you, yelling after you from top to bottom of the high street of a country town, and pursuing you with threats of death! Every eye is a flame of fire, abuse is on every lip, these firebrands of loathing flare up above a hideous cry of 'Kill him! down with the murderer!'—a sort of bass in the background."

"So your Dalmatians yelled in French?" said the Count. "You describe the scene as if it had happened yesterday."

Schinner was for the moment dumfounded.

"The mob speaks the same language everywhere," said Mistigris the politician.

"Finally," Schinner went on again, "when I was in the local Court of Justice and in the presence of the judges of that country, I was informed that the diabolical corsair was dead, poisoned by Zéna.—How I wished I could put on a clean shirt!

"On my soul, I knew nothing about this melodrama. It would seem that the fair Greek was wont to add a little opium—poppies are so plentiful there, as monsieur has told you—to her pirate's grog to secure a few minutes' liberty to take a walk, and the night before the poor woman had made a mistake in the dose. It was the damned corsair's money that made the trouble for my Zéna; but she accounted for everything so simply, that I was released at once on the strength of the old woman's affidavit, with an order from the Mayor of the town and the Austrian Commissioner of Police to remove myself to Rome. Zéna, who allowed the heirs and the officers of the law to help themselves liberally to the Uscoque's wealth, was let off, I was told, with two years' seclusion in a convent, where she still is.—I will go back and paint her portrait, for in a few years everything will be forgotten.—And these are the follies of eighteen!"

"Yes, and you left me without a sou in the *locanda* at Venice," said Mistigris. "I made my way from Venice to Rome, to see if I could find you, by daubing portraits at five francs a head, and never got paid; but it was a jolly time! Happiness, they say, does not dwell under gilt hoofs."

"You may imagine the reflections that choked me with bile in a Dalmatian prison, thrown there without a protector, having to answer to the Dalmatian Austrians, and threatened with the loss of my head for having twice taken a walk with a woman who insisted on being followed by her housekeeper. That is what I call bad luck!" cried Schinner.

"What," said Oscar guilelessly, "did that happen to you?"

"Why not to this gentleman, since it had already happened during the French occupation of Illyria to one of our most distinguished artillery officers?" said the Count with meaning.

"And did you believe the artillery man?" asked Mistigris slily.

"And is that all?" asked Oscar.

"Well," said Mistigris, "he cannot tell you that he had his head cut off. Those who live last live longest."

"And are there any farms out here?" asked old Léger. "What do they grow there?"

"There is the Maraschino crop," said Mistigris. "A plant that grows just as high as your lips and yields the liqueur of that name."

"Ah!" said Léger.

"I was only three days in the town and a fortnight in prison," replied Schinner. "I saw nothing, not even the fields where they grow the Maraschino."

"They are making game of you," said Georges to the farmer. "Maraschino grows in cases."

Pierrotin's chaise was now on the way down one of the steep sides of the valley of Saint-Brice, towards the inn in the middle of that large village, where he was to wait an hour to let the horses take breath, eat their oats, and get a drink. It was now about half-past one.

"Hallo! It is farmer Léger!" cried the innkeeper, as the vehicle drew up at his door. "Do you take breakfast?"

"Once every day," replied the burly customer. "We can eat a snack."

"Order breakfast for us," said Georges, carrying his cane as if he were shouldering a musket, in a cavalier style that bewitched Oscar.

Oscar felt a pang of frenzy when he saw this reckless adventurer take a fancy straw cigar-case out of his side pocket, and from it a beautiful tan-colored cigar, which he smoked in the doorway while waiting for the meal.

"Do you smoke?" said Georges to Oscar.

"Sometimes," said the schoolboy, puffing out his little chest and assuming a dashing style.

Georges held out the open cigar-case to Oscar and to Schinner.

"The devil!" said the great painter. "Ten-sous cigars!"

"The remains of what I brought from Spain," said the adventurer. "Are you going to have breakfast?"

"No," said the artist. "They will wait for me at the château. Besides, I had some food before starting."

"And you," said Georges to Oscar.

"I have had breakfast," said Oscar.

Oscar would have given ten years of his life to have boots and trouser-straps. He stood sneezing, and choking, and spitting, and sucking up the smoke with ill-disguised grimaces.

"You don't know how to smoke," said Schinner. "Look here," and Schinner, without moving a muscle, drew in the smoke of his cigar and blew it out through his nose without the slightest effort. Then again he kept the smoke in his throat, took the cigar out of his mouth, and exhaled it gracefully.

"There, young man," said the painter.

"And this, young man, is another way," said Georges, imitating Schinner, but swallowing the smoke so that none returned.

"And my parents fancy that I am educated," thought poor Oscar, trying to smoke with a grace. But he felt so mortally sick that he allowed Mistigris to bone his cigar and to say, as he puffed at it with conspicuous satisfaction:

"I suppose you have nothing catching."

But Oscar wished he were only strong enough to hit Mistigris.

"Why," said he, pointing to Colonel Georges, "eight francs for Alicante and cheese-cakes, forty sous in cigars, and his breakfast, which will cost——"

"Ten francs at least," said Mistigris. "But so it is, little dishes make long bills."

"Well, Père Léger, we can crack a bottle of Bordeaux apiece?" said Georges to the farmer.

"His breakfast will cost him twenty francs," cried Oscar. "Why, that comes to more than thirty francs!"

Crushed by the sense of his inferiority, Oscar sat down on

the corner-stone lost in a reverie, which hindered his observing that his trousers, hitched up as he sat, showed the line of union between an old stocking-leg and a new foot to it, a masterpiece of his mother's skill.

"Our understandings are twins, if not our souls," said Mistigris, pulling one leg of his trousers a little way up to show a similar effect. "But a baker's children are always worst bread."

The jest made Monsieur de Sérizy smile as he stood with folded arms under the gateway behind the two lads. Heedless as they were, the solemn statesman envied them their faults; he liked their bounce, and admired the quickness of their fun.

"Well, can you get les Moulineaux? for you went to Paris to fetch the money," said the innkeeper to old Léger, having just shown him a nag for sale in his stables. "It will be a fine joke to screw a bit out of the Comte de Sérizy, a peer of France and a State Minister."

The wily old courtier betrayed nothing in his face, but he looked round to watch the farmer.

"His goose is cooked!" replied Léger in a low voice.

"So much the better; I love to see your bigwigs done.—And if you want a score or so thousand francs, I will lend you the money. But François, the driver of Touchards' six o'clock coach, told me as he went through that Monsieur Margueron is invited to dine with the Comte de Sérizy himself to-day at Presles."

"That is His Excellency's plan, but we have our little notions too," replied the farmer.

"Ah, but the Count will find a place for Monsieur Margueron's son, and you have no places to give away," said the innkeeper.

"No, but if the Count has the Ministers on his side, I have King Louis XVIII. on mine," said Léger in the innkeeper's ear, "and forty thousand of his effigies handed over to Master Moreau will enable me to buy les Moulineaux for two hundred and sixty thousand francs before Monsieur de Sérizy can step

in, and he will be glad enough to take it off my hands for three hundred and sixty thousand rather than have the lands valued lot by lot."

"Not a bad turn, master," said his friend.

"How is that for a stroke of business?" said the farmer.

"And, after all, the farm lands are worth it to him," said the innkeeper.

"Les Moulineaux pays six thousand francs a year in kind, and I mean to renew the lease at seven thousand five hundred for eighteen years. So as he invests at more than two and a half per cent, Monsieur le Comte won't be robbed.

"Not to commit Monsieur Moreau, I am to be proposed to the Count by him as a tenant; he will seem to be taking care of his master's interests by finding him nearly three per cent for his money and a farmer who will pay regularly——"

"And what will Moreau get out of the job altogether?"

"Well, if the Count makes him a present of ten thousand francs, he will clear fifty thousand on the transaction; but he will have earned them fairly."

"And, after all, what does the Count care for Presles? He is so rich," said the innkeeper. "I have never set eyes on him myself."

"Nor I neither," said the farmer. "But he is coming at last to live there; he would not otherwise be laying out two hundred thousand francs on redecorating the rooms. It is as fine as the King's palace."

"Well, then," replied the other, "it is high time that Moreau should feather his nest."

"Yes, yes; for when once the Master and Mis'ess are on the spot, they will not keep their eyes in their pockets."

Though the conversation was carried on in a low tone, the Count had kept his ears open.

"Here I have all the evidence I was going in search of," thought he, looking at the burly farmer as he went back into the kitchen. "But perhaps it is no more than a scheme as yet. Perhaps Moreau has not closed with the offer——!" So averse was he to believe that the land-steward was capable of mixing himself up in such a plot.

Pierrotin now came out to give his horses water. The Count supposed that the driver would breakfast with the innkeeper and Léger, and what he had overheard made him fear the least betrayal.

"The whole posse are in league," thought he; "it serves them right to thwart their scheming.—Pierrotin," said he in a low voice as he went up to the driver, "I promised you ten louis to keep my secret; but if you will take care not to let out my name—and I shall know whether you have mentioned it, or given the least clue to it, to any living soul, even at l'Isle-Adam—to-morrow morning, as you pass the château, I will give you the thousand francs to pay for your new coach.—And for greater safety," added he, slapping Pierrotin's back, "do without your breakfast; stay outside with your horses."

Pierrotin had turned pale with joy.

"I understand, Monsieur le Comte, trust me. It is old Père Léger——"

"It concerns every living soul," replied the Count.

"Be easy.—Come, hurry up," said Pierrotin, half opening the kitchen door, "we are late already. Listen, Père Léger, there is the hill before us, you know; I am not hungry; I will go on slowly, and you will easily catch me up.—A walk will do you good."

"The man is in a devil of a hurry!" said the innkeeper. "Won't you come and join us? The Colonel is standing wine at fifty sous, and a bottle of champagne."

"No, I can't. I have a fish on board to be delivered at Stors by three o'clock for a big dinner, and such customers don't see a joke any more than the fish."

"All right," said Léger to the innkeeper; "put the horse you want me to buy in the shafts of your gig, and you can drive us on to pick up Pierrotin. Then we can breakfast in peace, and I shall see what the nag can do. Three of us can very well ride in your trap."

To the Count's great satisfaction, Pierrotin himself brought out his horses. Schinner and Mistigris had walked forward.

Pierrotin picked up the two artists half-way between Saint-

Brice and Poncelles; and just as he reached the top of the hill, whence they had a view of Écouen, the belfry of le Mesnil, and the woods which encircle that beautiful landscape, the sound of a galloping horse drawing a gig that rattled and jingled announced the pursuit of Père Léger and Mina's Colonel, who settled themselves into the chaise again.

As Pierrotin zigzagged down the hill into Moisselles, Georges, who had never ceased expatiating to old Léger on the beauty of the innkeeper's wife at Saint-Brice, exclaimed:

"I say, this is not amiss by way of landscape, Great Painter?"

"It ought not to astonish you, who have seen Spain and the East."

"And I have two of the Spanish cigars left. If nobody objects, will you finish them off, Schinner? The little man had enough with a mouthful or two."

Old Léger and the Count kept silence, which was taken for consent.

Oscar, annoyed at being spoken of as "a little man," retorted while the others were lighting their cigars:

"Though I have not been Mina's aide-de-camp, monsieur, and have not been in the East, I may go there yet. The career for which my parents intend me will, I hope, relieve me of the necessity of riding in a public chaise when I am as old as you are. When once I am a person of importance, and get a place, I will stay in it——"

"*Et cetera punctum!*" said Mistigris, imitating the sort of hoarse crow which made Oscar's speech even more ridiculous; for the poor boy was at the age when the beard begins to grow and the voice to break. "After all," added Mistigris, "extremes bleat."

"My word!" said Schinner, "the horses can scarcely drag such a weight of dignity."

"So your parents intend to start you in a career," said Georges very seriously. "And what may it be?"

"In diplomacy," said Oscar.

Three shouts of laughter went forth like three rockets from

Mistigris, Schinner, and the old farmer. Even the Count could not help smiling. Georges kept his countenance.

"By Allah! But there is nothing to laugh at," said the Colonel. "Only, young man," he went on, addressing Oscar, "it struck me that your respectable mother is not for the moment in a social position wholly beseeming an ambassadress. —She had a most venerable straw bag, and a patch on her shoe."

"My mother, monsieur!" said Oscar, fuming with indignation. "It was our housekeeper."

" '*Our*' is most aristocratic!" cried the Count, interrupting Oscar.

"The King says *our*," replied Oscar haughtily.

A look from Georges checked a general burst of laughter; it conveyed to the painter and to Mistigris the desirability of dealing judiciously with Oscar, so as to make the most of this mine of amusement.

"The gentleman is right," said the painter to the Count, designating Oscar. "Gentlefolks talk of *our* house; only second-rate people talk of my house. Everybody has a mania for seeming to have what he has not. For a man loaded with decorations——"

"Then monsieur also is a decorator?" asked Mistigris.

"You know nothing of Court language.—I beg the favor of your protection, your Excellency," added Schinner, turnto Oscar.

"I must congratulate myself," said the Count, "on having traveled with three men who are or will be famous—a painter who is already illustrious, a future general, and a young diplomatist who will some day reunite Belgium to France."

But Oscar, having so basely denied his mother, and furious at perceiving that his companions were making game of him, determined to convince their incredulity at any cost.

"All is not gold that glitters!" said he, flashing lightnings from his eyes.

"You've got it wrong," cried Mistigris. "All is not told that titters. You will not go far in diplomacy if you do not know your proverbs better than that."

"If I do not know my proverbs, I know my way."

"It must be leading you a long way," said Georges, "for your family housekeeper gave you provisions enough for a sea voyage—biscuits, chocolate——"

"A particular roll and some chocolate, yes, monsieur," returned Oscar. "My stomach is much too delicate to digest the cagmag you get at an inn."

"'Cagmag' is as delicate as your digestion," retorted Georges.

"'Cagmag' is good!" said the great painter.

"The word is in use in the best circles," said Mistigris; "I use it myself at the coffee-house of the *Poule Noire*."

"Your tutor was, no doubt, some famous professor—Monsieur Andrieux of the Academy, or Monsieur Royer-Collard?" asked Schinner.

"My tutor was the Abbé Loraux, now the Vicar of St. Sulpice," replied Oscar, remembering the name of the confessor of the school.

"You did very wisely to have a private tutor," said Mistigris, "for the fountain—of learning—brought forth a mouse; and you will do something for your Abbé, of course?"

"Certainly; he will be a bishop some day."

"Through your family interest?" asked Georges quite gravely.

"We may perhaps contribute to his due promotion, for the Abbé Frayssinous often comes to our house."

"Oh, do you know the Abbé Frayssinous?" asked the Count.

"He is under obligations to my father," replied Oscar.

"And you are on your way to your estates no doubt?" said Georges.

"No, monsieur; but I have no objection to saying where I am going. I am on my way to the château of Presles, the Comte de Sérizy's."

"The devil you are! To Presles?" cried Shinner, turning crimson.

"Then you know Monseigneur the Comte de Sérizy?" asked Georges.

Farmer Léger turned so as to look at Oscar with a bewildered gaze, exclaiming:

"And Monsieur le Comte is at Presles?"

"So it would seem, as I am going there," replied Oscar.

"Then you have often seen the Count?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"As plainly as I see you. I am great friends with his son, who is about my age, nineteen; and we ride together almost every day."

"Kings have been known to harry beggar-maids," said Mistigris sapiently.

A wink from Pierrotin had relieved the farmer's alarm.

"On my honor," said the Count to Oscar, "I am delighted to find myself in the company of a young gentleman who can speak with authority of that nobleman. I am anxious to secure his favor in a somewhat important business in which his help will cost him nothing. It is a little claim against the American Government. I should be glad to learn something as to the sort of man he is."

"Oh, if you hope to succeed," replied Oscar, with an assumption of competence, "do not apply to him, but to his wife; he is madly in love with her, no one knows that better than I, and his wife cannot endure him."

"Why," asked Georges.

"The Count has some skin disease that makes him hideous, and Doctor Alibert has tried in vain to cure it. Monsieur de Sérizy would give half of his immense fortune to have a chest like mine," said Oscar, opening his shirt and showing a clean pink skin like a child's. "He lives alone, secluded in his house. You need a good introduction to see him at all. In the first place, he gets up very early in the morning, and works from three till eight, after eight he follows various treatments, sulphur baths or vapor baths. They stew him in a sort of iron tank, for he is always hoping to be cured."

"If he is so intimate with the King, why is he not 'touched' by him?" asked Georges.

"Then the lady keeps her husband in hot water," said Mistigris.

"The Count has promised thirty thousand france to a famous Scotch physician who is prescribing for him now," Oscar went on.

"Then his wife can hardly be blamed for giving herself the best——" Schinner began, but he did not finish his sentence.

"To be sure," said Oscar. "The poor man is so shriveled up, so decrepit, you would think he was eighty. He is as dry as parchment, and to add to his misfortune, he feels his position——"

"And feels it hot, I should think," remarked the farmer facetiously.

"Monsieur, he worships his wife, and dares not blame her," replied Oscar. "He performs the most ridiculous scenes with her, you would die of laughing—exactly like Arnolphe in Molière's play."

The Count, in blank dismay, looked at Pierrotin, who seeing him apparently unmoved, concluded that Madame Clapart's son was inventing a pack of slander.

"So, monsieur, if you wish to succeed," said Oscar to the Count, "apply to the Marquis d'Aiglemont. If you have madame's venerable adorer on your side, you will at one stroke secure both the lady and her husband."

"That is what we call killing two-thirds with one bone," said Mistigris.

"Dear me!" said the painter, "have you seen the Count undressed? Are you his valet?"

"His valet!" cried Oscar.

"By the Mass! A man does not say such things about his friends in a public conveyance," added Mistigris. "Discretion, my young friend, is the mother of inattention. I simply don't hear you."

"It is certainly a case of tell me whom you know, and I will tell you whom you hate," exclaimed Schinner.

"But you must learn, Great Painter," said Georges pompously, "that no man can speak ill of those he does not know. The boy has proved at any rate that he knows his Sérizy by

heart. Now, if he had only talked of Madame, it might have been supposed that he was on terms——"

"Not another word about the Comtesse de Sérizy, young men!" cried the Count. "Her brother, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, is a friend of mine, and the man who is so rash as to cast a doubt on the Countess' honor will answer to me for his speech."

"Monsieur is right," said the artist, "there should be no humbug about women."

"*God, Honor, and the Ladies!* I saw a melodrama of that name," said Mistigris.

"Though I do not know Mina, I know the Keeper of the Seals," said the Count, looking at Georges. "And though I do not display my Orders," he added, turning to the painter, "I can hinder their being given to those who do not deserve them. In short, I know so many people, that I know Monsieur Grindot, the architect of Presles.—Stop, Pierrotin; I am going to get out."

Pierrotin drove on to the village of Moisselles, and there, at a little country inn, the travelers alighted. This bit of road was passed in utter silence.

"Where on earth is that little rascal going?" asked the Count, leading Pierrotin into the inn-yard.

"To stay with your steward. He is the son of a poor lady who lives in the Rue de la Cerisaie, and to whom I often carry fruit and game and poultry—a certain Madame Husson."

"Who is that gentleman?" old Léger asked Pierrotin when the Count had turned away.

"I don't know," said Pierrotin. "He never rode with me before; but he may be the Prince who owns the château of Maffliers. He has just told me where to set him down on the road; he is not going so far as l'Isle-Adam."

"Pierrotin fancies he is the owner of Maffliers," said the farmer to Georges, getting back into the chaise.

At this stage the three young fellows, looking as silly as pilferers caught in the act, did not dare meet each other's eye, and seemed lost in reflections on the upshot of their fictions.

"That is what I call a great lie and little wool," observed Mistigris.

"You see, I know the Count," said Oscar.

"Possibly, but you will never be an ambassador," replied Georges. "If you must talk in a public carriage, learn to talk like me and tell nothing."

"The mother of mischief is no more than a midge's sting," said Mistigris, conclusively.

The Count now got into the chaise, and Pierrotin drove on; perfect silence reigned.

"Well, my good friends," said the Count, as they reached the wood of Carreau, "we are all as mute as if we were going to execution."

"A man should know that silence is a bold 'un," said Mistigris with an air.

"It is a fine day," remarked Georges.

"What place is that?" asked Oscar, pointing to the château of Franconville, which shows so finely on the slope of the great forest of Saint-Martin.

"What!" said the Count, "you who have been so often to Presles, do not know Franconville when you see it?"

"Monsieur knows more of men than of houses," said Mistigris.

"A sucking diplomatist may sometimes be oblivious," exclaimed Georges.

"Remember my name!" cried Oscar in a fury, "it is Oscar Husson, and in ten years' time I shall be famous."

After this speech, pronounced with great bravado, Oscar huddled himself into his corner.

"Husson de—what?" asked Mistigris.

"A great family," replied the Count. "The Hussons de la Cerisaie. The gentleman was born at the foot of the Imperial throne."

Oscar blushed to the roots of his hair in an agony of alarm. They were about to descend the steep hill by la Cave, at the bottom of which, in a narrow valley, on the skirt of the forest of Saint-Martin, stands the splendid château of Presles.

"Gentlemen," said Monsieur de Sérizy, "I wish you well in your several careers. You, Monsieur le Colonel, make your peace with the King of France; the Czerni-Georges must be on good terms with the Bourbons.—I have no forecast for you, my dear Monsieur Schinner; your fame is already made, and you have won it nobly by splendid work. But you are such a dangerous man that I, who have a wife, should not dare to offer you a commission under my roof.—As to Monsieur Husson, he needs no interest; he is the master of statesmen's secrets, and can make them tremble.—Monsieur Léger is going to steal a march on the Comte de Sérizy; I only hope that he may hold his own.—Put me down here, Pierrotin, and you can take me up at the same spot to-morrow!" added the Count, who got out, leaving his fellow-travelers quite confounded.

"When you take to your heels you can't take too much," remarked Mistigris, seeing how nimbly the traveler vanished in a sunken path.

"Oh, he must be the Count who has taken Franconville; he is going that way," said Père Léger.

"If ever again I try to humbug in a public carriage I will call myself out," said the false Schinner. "It is partly your fault too, Mistigris," said he, giving his boy a rap on his cap.

"Oh, ho! I—who only followed you to Venice," replied Mistigris. "But play a dog a bad game and slang him."

"Do you know," said Georges to Oscar, "that if by any chance that was the Comte de Sérizy, I should be sorry to find myself in your skin, although it is so free from disease."

Oscar, reminded by these words of his mother's advice, turned pale, and was quite sobered.

"Here you are, gentlemen," said Pierrotin, pulling up at a handsome gate.

"What, already?" exclaimed the painter, Georges, and Oscar all in a breath.

"That's a stiff one!" cried Pierrotin. "Do you mean to say, gentlemen, that neither of you has ever been here before? —There stands the château of Presles!"

"All right," said Georges, recovering himself. "I am going on to the farm of les Moulineaux," he added, not choosing to tell his fellow-travelers that he was bound for the house.

"Then you are coming with me," said Léger.

"How is that?"

"I am the farmer at les Moulineaux. And what do you want of me, Colonel?"

"A taste of your butter," said Georges, pulling out his portfolio.

"Pierrotin, drop my things at the steward's," said Oscar; "I am going straight to the house." And he plunged into a cross-path without knowing whither it led.

"Hallo! Mr. Ambassador," cried Pierrotin, "you are going into the forest. If you want to get to the château, go in by the side gate."

Thus compelled to go in, Oscar made his way into the spacious courtyard with a huge stone-edged flower-bed in the middle, and stone posts all round with chains between While Père Léger stood watching Oscar, Georges, thunderstruck at hearing the burly farmer describe himself as the owner of les Moulineaux, vanished so nimbly that when the fat man looked round for his Colonel, he could not find him.

At Pierrotin's request the gate was opened, and he went in with much dignity to deposit the Great Schinner's multifarious properties at the lodge. Oscar was in dismay at seeing Mistigris and the artist, the witnesses of his brag, really admitted to the château.

In ten minutes Pierrotin had unloaded the chaise of the painter's paraphernalia, Ocar Husson's luggage, and the neat leather portmanteau, which he mysteriously confided to the lodge-keeper. Then he turned his machine, cracking his whip energetically, and went on his way to the woods of l'Isle-Adam, his face still wearing the artful expression of a peasant summing up his profits.

Nothing was wanting to his satisfaction. On the morrow he would have his thousand francs.

Oscar, with his tail between his legs, so to speak, wandered

round the great court, waiting to see what would become of his traveling companions, when he presently saw Monsieur Moreau come out of the large entrance-hall, known as the guardroom, on to the front steps. The land-steward, who wore a long blue riding-coat down to his heels, had on nankin-colored breeches and hunting-boots, and carried a crop in his hand.

"Well, my boy, so here you are? And how is the dear mother?" said he, shaking hands with Oscar. "Good-morning, gentlemen; you, no doubt, are the painters promised us by Monsieur Grindot the architect?" said he to the artists.

He whistled twice, using the end of his riding-whip, and the lodge-keeper came forward.

"Take these gentlemen to their rooms—Nos. 14 and 15; Madame Moreau will give you the keys. Light fires this evening if necessary, and carry up their things.—I am instructed by Monsieur le Comte to ask you to dine with me," he added, addressing the artists. "At five, as in Paris. If you are sportsmen, you can be well amused. I have permission to shoot and fish, and we have twelve thousand acres of shooting outside our own grounds."

Oscar, the painter, and Mistigris, one as much disconcerted as the other, exchanged glances. Still, Mistigris, faithful to his instincts, exclaimed:

"Pooh, never throw the candle after the shade! On we go!"

Little Husson followed the steward, who led the way, walking quickly across the park.

"Jacques," said he to one of his sons, "go and tell your mother that young Husson has arrived, and say that I am obliged to go over to les Moulineaux for a few minutes."

Moreau, now about fifty years of age, a dark man of medium height, had a stern expression. His bilious complexion, highly colored nevertheless by a country life, suggested, at first sight, a character very unlike what his really was. Everything contributed to the illusion. His hair was turning gray, his blue eyes and a large aquiline nose gave him a sinister

expression, all the more so because his eyes were too close together; still, his full lips, the shape of his face, and the good-humor of his address, would, to a keen observer, have been indication of kindliness. His very decided manner and abrupt way of speech impressed Oscar immensely with a sense of his penetration, arising from his real affection for the boy. Brought up by his mother to look up to the steward as a great man, Oscar always felt small in Moreau's presence; and now, finding himself at Presles, he felt an oppressive uneasiness, as if he had some ill to fear from this fatherly friend, who was his only protector.

"Why, my dear Oscar, you do not look glad to be here," said the steward. "But you will have plenty to amuse you; you can learn to ride, to shoot, and hunt."

"I know nothing of such things," said Oscar dully.

"But I have asked you here on purpose to teach you."

"Mamma told me not to stay more than a fortnight, because Madame Moreau——"

"Oh, well, we shall see," replied Moreau, almost offended by Oscar's doubts of his conjugal influence.

Moreau's youngest son, a lad of fifteen, active and brisk, now came running up.

"Here," said his father, "take your new companion to your mother."

And the steward himself went off by the shortest path to a keeper's hut between the park and the wood.

The handsome lodge, given by the Count as his land-steward's residence, had been built some years before the Revolution by the owner of the famous estate of Cassan or Bergeret, a farmer-general of enormous wealth, who made himself as notorious for extravagance as Bodard, Pâris, and Bouret, laying out gardens, diverting rivers, building hermitages, Chinese temples, and other costly magnificence.

This house, in the middle of a large garden, of which one wall divided it from the outbuildings of Presles, had formerly had its entrance on the village High Street. Monsieur de Sérizy's father, when he purchased the property, had only to

pull down the dividing wall and build up the front gate to make this plot and house part of the outbuildings. Then, by pulling down another wall, he added to his park all the garden land that the former owner had purchased to complete his ring fence.

The lodge, built of freestone, was in the Louis XV. style, with linen-pattern panels under the windows, like those on the colonnades of the Place Louis XV., in stiff, angular folds; it consisted, on the ground floor, of a fine drawing-room opening into a bedroom, and of a dining-room, with a billiard-room adjoining. These two suites, parallel to each other, were divided by a sort of ante-room or hall, and the stairs. The hall was decorated by the doors of the drawing-room and dining-room, both handsomely ornamental. The kitchen was under the dining-room, for there was a flight of ten outside steps.

Madame Moreau had taken the first floor for her own, and had transformed what had been the best bedroom into a boudoir; this boudoir, and the drawing-room below, handsomely fitted up with the best pickings of the old furniture from the château, would certainly have done no discredit to the mansion of a lady of fashion. The drawing room, hung with blue-and-white damask, the spoils of a state bed, and with old gilt-wood furniture upholstered with the same silk, displayed ample curtains to the doors and windows. Some pictures that had formerly been panels, with flower-stands, a few modern tables, and handsome lamps, besides an antique hanging chandelier of cut glass, gave the room a very dignified effect. The carpet was old Persian.

The boudoir was altogether modern and fitted to Madame Moreau's taste, in imitation of a tent, with blue silk ropes on a light gray ground. There was the usual divan with pillows and cushions for the feet, and the flower-stands, carefully cherished by the head-gardener, were a joy to the eye with their pyramids of flowers.

The dining-room and billiard-room were fitted with mahogany. All round the house the steward's lady had planned

a flower-garden, beautifully kept, and beyond it lay the park. Clumps of foreign shrubs shut out the stables, and to give admission from the road to her visitors she had opened a gate where the old entrance had been built up.

Thus, the dependent position filled by the Moreaus was cleverly glossed over; and they were the better able to figure as rich folks managing a friend's estate for their pleasure, because neither the Count nor the Countess ever came to quash their pretensions; and the liberality of Monsieur de Sérizy's concessions allowed of their living in abundance, the luxury of country homes. Dairy produce, eggs, poultry, game, fruit, forage, flowers, wood, and vegetables—the steward and his wife had all of these in profusion, and bought literally nothing but butcher's meat and the wine and foreign produce necessary to their lordly extravagance. The poultry-wife made the bread; and, in fact, for the last few years, Moreau had paid his butcher's bill with the pigs of the farm, keeping only as much pork as he needed.

One day the Countess, always very generous to her former lady's maid, made Madame Moreau a present, as a souvenir perhaps, of a little traveling chaise of a past fashion, which Moreau had furbished up, and in which his wife drove out behind a pair of good horses, useful at other times in the grounds. Besides this pair, the steward had his saddle-horse. He ploughed part of the park land, and raised grain enough to feed the beasts and servants; he cut three hundred tons more or less of good hay, accounting for no more than one hundred, encroaching on the license vaguely granted by the Count; and instead of using his share of the produce on the premises, he sold it. He kept his poultry-farm, his pigeons, and his cows on the crops from the park-land; but then the manure from his stables was used in the Count's garden. Each of these pilfering acts had an excuse ready.

Madame Moreau's house-servant was the daughter of one of the gardeners, and waited on her and cooked; she was helped in the housework by a girl, who also attended to the poultry and dairy. Moreau had engaged an invalided soldier

named Brochon to look after the horses and do the dirty work.

At Nerville, at Chauvry, at Beaumont, at Maffliers, at Préroles, at Nointel, the steward's pretty wife was everywhere received by persons who did not, or affected not to know her original position in life. And Moreau could confer obligations. He could use his master's interest in matters which are of immense importance in the depths of the country though trivial in Paris. After securing for friends the appointments of Justice of the Peace at Beaumont and at l'Isle-Adam, he had, in the course of the same year, saved an Inspector of Forest-lands from dismissal, and obtained the Cross of the Legion of Honor for the quartermaster at Beaumont. So there was never a festivity among the more respectable neighbors without Monsieur and Madame Moreau being invited. The Curé and the Mayor of Presles were to be seen every evening at their house. A man can hardly help being a good fellow when he has made himself so comfortable.

So Madame la Régisseuse—a pretty woman, and full of airs, like every grand lady's servant who, when she marries, apes her mistress—introduced the latest fashions, wore the most expensive shoes, and never walked out but in fine weather. Though her husband gave her no more than five hundred francs a year for dress, this in the country is a very large sum, especially when judiciously spent; and his "lady," fair, bright, and fresh-looking, at the age of thirty-six, and still slight, neat, and attractive in spite of her three children, still played the girl, and gave herself the airs of a princess. If, as she drove past in her open chaise on her way to Beaumont, some stranger happened to inquire, "Who is that?" Madame Moreau was furious if a native of the place replied, "She is the steward's wife at Presles." She aimed at being taken for the mistress of the château.

She amused herself with patronizing the villagers, as a great lady might have done. Her husband's power with the Count, proved in so many ways, hindered the townsfolk from laughing at Madame Moreau, who was a person of importance in the eyes of the peasantry.

Estelle, however—her name was Estelle—did not interfere in the management, any more than a stockbroker's wife interferes in dealings on the Bourse; she even relied on her husband for the administration of the house and of their income. Quite confident of her own powers of pleasing, she was miles away from imagining that this delightful life, which had gone on for seventeen years, could ever be in danger; however, on hearing that the Count had resolved on restoring the splendid château of Presles, she understood that all her enjoyments were imperiled, and she had persuaded her husband to come to terms with Léger, so as to have a retreat at l'Isle-Adam. She could not have borne to find herself in an almost servile position in the presence of her former mistress, who would undoubtedly laugh at her on finding her established at the lodge in a style that aped the lady of fashion.

The origin of the deep-seated enmity between the Reyberts and the Moreaus lay in a stab inflicted on Madame Moreau by Madame de Reybert in revenge for a pin-prick that the steward's wife had dared to give on the first arrival of the Reyberts, lest her supremacy should be infringed on by the lady *née* de Corroy. Madame de Reybert had mentioned, and perhaps for the first time informed the neighborhood, of Madame Moreau's original calling. The words *lady's maid* flew from lip to lip. All those who envied the Moreaus—and they must have been many—at Beaumont, at l'Isle-Adam, at Maffliers, at Champagne, at Nerville, at Chauvry, at Baillet, at Moisselles, made such pregnant comments that more than one spark from this conflagration fell into the Moreaus' home. For four years, now, the Reyberts, excommunicated by their pretty rival, had become the object of so much hostile animadversion from her partisans, that their position would have been untenable but for the thought of vengeance which had sustained them to this day.

The Moreaus, who were very good friends with Grindot the architect, had been told by him of the arrival ere long of a painter commissioned to finish the decorative panels at the

château, Schinner having executed the more important pieces. This great painter recommended the artist we have seen traveling with Mistigris, to paint the borders, arabesques, and other accessory decorations. Hence, for two days past, Madame Moreau had been preparing her war-paint and sitting expectant. An artist who was to board with her for some weeks was worthy of some outlay. Schinner and his wife had been quartered in the château, where, by the Count's orders, they had been entertained like my lord himself. Grindot, who boarded with the Moreaus, had treated the great artist with so much respect, that neither the steward nor his wife had ventured on any familiarity. And, indeed, the richest and most noble landowners in the district had vied with each other in entertaining Schinner and his wife. So now Madame Moreau, much pleased at the prospect of turning the tables, promised herself that she would sound the trumpet before the artist who was to be her guest, and make him out a match in talent for Schinner.

Although on the two previous days she had achieved very coquettish toilets, the steward's pretty wife had husbanded her resources too well not to have reserved the most bewitching till the Saturday, never doubting that on that day at any rate the artist would arrive to dinner. She had shod herself in bronze kid with fine thread stockings. A dress of finely striped pink-and-white muslin, a pink belt with a chased gold buckle, a cross and heart round her neck, and wristlets of black velvet on her bare arms—Madame de Sérizy had fine arms, and was fond of displaying them—gave Madame Moreau the style of a fashionable Parisian. She put on a very handsome Leghorn hat, graced with a bunch of moss roses made by Nattier, and under its broad shade her fair hair flowed in glossy curls.

Having ordered a first-rate dinner and carefully inspected the rooms, she went out at an hour which brought her to the large flower-bed in the court of the château, like the lady of the house, just when the coach would pass. Over her head she held an elegant pink silk parasol lined with white and trimmed with fringe. On seeing Pierrotin hand over to the

lodge-keeper the artist's extraordinary-looking luggage, and perceiving no owner, Estelle had returned home lamenting the waste of another carefully arranged dress. And, like most people who have dressed for an occasion, she felt quite incapable of any occupation but that of doing nothing in her drawing-room while waiting for the passing of the Beaumont coach which should come through an hour after Pierrotin's, though it did not start from Paris till one o'clock; thus she was waiting at home while the two young artists were dressing for dinner. In fact, the young painter and Mistigris were so overcome by the description of lovely Madame Moreau given them by the gardener whom they had questioned, that it was obvious to them both that they must get themselves into their best "toggery." So they donned their very best before presenting themselves at the steward's house, whither they were conducted by Jacques Moreau, the eldest of the children, a stalwart youth, dressed in the English fashion, in a round jacket with a turned-down collar, and as happy during the holidays as a fish in water, here on the estate where his mother reigned supreme.

"Mamma," said he, "here are the two artists come from Monsieur Schinner."

Madame Moreau, very agreeably surprised, rose, bid her son set chairs, and displayed all her graces.

"Mamma, little Husson is with father; I am to go to fetch him," whispered the boy in her ear.

"There is no hurry, you can stop and amuse him," said the mother.

The mere words "there is no hurry" showed the two artists how entirely unimportant was their traveling companion, but the tone also betrayed the indifference of a stepmother for her stepchild. In fact, Madame Moreau, who, for seventeen years of married life, could not fail to be aware of her husband's attachment to Madame Clapart and young Husson, hated the mother and son in so overt a manner that it is easy to understand why Moreau had never till now ventured to invite Oscar to Presles.

"We are enjoined, my husband and I," said she to the two artists, "to do the honors of the château. We are fond of art, and more especially of artists," said she, with a simper, "and I beg you to consider yourselves quite at home there. In the country, you see, there is no ceremony; liberty is indispensable, otherwise life is too insipid. We have had Monsieur Schinner here already——"

Mistigris gave his companion a mischievous wink.

"You know him, of course," said Estelle, after a pause.

"Who does not know him, madame?" replied the painter.

"He is as well known as the parish birch," added Mistigris.

"Monsieur Grindot mentioned your name," said Madame Moreau, "but really I——"

"Joseph Bridau, madame," replied the artist, extremely puzzled as to what this woman could be.

Mistigris was beginning to fume inwardly at this fair lady's patronizing tone; still, he waited, as Bridau did too, for some movement, some chance word to enlighten them, one of those expressions of assumed fine-ladyism, which painters, those born and cruel observers of folly—the perennial food of their pencil—seize on in an instant. In the first place, Estelle's large hands and feet, those of a peasant from the district of Saint-Lô, struck them at once; and before long one or two lady's-maid's phrases, modes of speech that gave the lie to the elegance of her dress, betrayed their prey into the hands of the artist and his apprentice. They exchanged a look which pledged them both to take Estelle quite seriously as a pastime during their stay.

"You are so fond of art, perhaps you cultivate it with success, madame?" said Joseph Bridau.

"No. Though my education was not neglected, it was purely commercial. But I have such a marked and delicate feeling for art, that Monsieur Schinner always begged me, when he had finished a piece, to give him my opinion."

"Just as Molière consulted Laforêt," said Mistigris.

Not knowing that Laforêt was a servant-girl, Madame Moreau responded with a graceful droop, showing that in her ignorance she regarded this speech as a compliment.

"How is it that he did not propose just to knock off your head?" said Bridau. "Painters are generally on the look-out for handsome women."

"What is your meaning, pray?" said Madame Moreau, on whose face dawned the wrath of an offended queen.

"In studio slang, to knock a thing off is to sketch it," said Mistigris, in an ingratiating tone, "and all we ask is to have handsome heads to sketch. And we sometimes say in admiration that a woman's beauty has knocked us over."

"Ah, I did not know the origin of the phrase!" replied she, with a look of languishing sweetness at Mistigris.

"My pupil, Monsieur Léon de Lora," said Bridau, "has a great talent for likeness. He would be only too happy, fair being, to leave you a *souvenir* of his skill by painting your charming face."

And Bridau signaled to Mistigris, as much as to say, "Come, drive it home, she really is not amiss!"

Taking this hint, Léon de Lora moved to the sofa by Estelle's side, and took her hand, which she left in his.

"Oh! if only as a surprise to your husband, madame, you could give me a few sittings in secret, I would try to excel myself. You are so lovely, so young, so charming! A man devoid of talent might become a genius with you for his model! In your eyes he would find——"

"And we would represent your sweet children in our arabesques," said Joseph, interrupting Mistigris.

"I would rather have them in my own drawing-room; but that would be asking too much," said she, looking coquettishly at Bridau.

"Beauty, madame, is a queen whom painters worship, and who has every right to command them."

"They are quite charming," thought Madame Moreau.—"Do you like driving out in the evening, after dinner, in an open carriage, in the woods?"

"Oh! oh! oh! oh!" cried Mistigris, in ecstatic tones at each added detail. "Why, Presles will be an earthly paradise."

"With a fair-haired Eve, a young and bewitching woman," added Bridau.

Just as Madame Moreau was preening herself, and soaring into the seventh heaven, she was brought down again like a kite by a tug at the cord.

"Madame!" exclaimed the maid, bouncing in like a cannon ball.

"Bless me, Rosalie, what can justify you in coming in like this without being called?"

Rosalie did not trouble her head about this apostrophe, but said in her mistress' ear:

"Monsieur le Comte is here."

"Did he ask for me?" said the steward's wife.

"No, madame—but—he wants his portmanteau and the key of his room."

"Let him have them then," said she, with a cross shrug to disguise her uneasiness.

"Mamma, here is Oscar Husson!" cried her youngest son, bringing in Oscar, who, as red as a poppy, dared not come forward as he saw the two painters in different dress.

"So here you are at last, boy," said Estelle coldly. "You are going to dress, I hope?" she went on, after looking at him from head to foot with great contempt. "I suppose your mother has not brought you up to dine in company in such clothes as those."

"Oh, no," said the ruthless Mistigris, "a coming diplomatist must surely have a seat—to his trousers! A coat to dine saves wine."

"A coming diplomatist?" cried Madame Moreau.

The tears rose to poor Oscar's eyes as he looked from Joseph to Léon.

"Only a jest by the way," replied Joseph, who wished to help Oscar in his straits.

"The boy wanted to make fun as we did, and he tried to humbug," said the merciless Mistigris. "And now he finds himself the ass with a lion's grin."

"Madame," said Rosalie, coming back to the drawing-room door, "his Excellency has ordered dinner for eight persons at six o'clock; what is to be done?"

While Estelle and her maid were holding counsel, the artists and Oscar gazed at each other, their eyes big with terrible apprehensions.

"His Excellency—Who?" said Joseph Bridau.

"Why, Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy," replied little Moreau.

"Was it he, by chance, in the coucou?" said Léon de Lora.

"Oh!" exclaimed Oscar, "the Comte de Sérizy would surely never travel but in a coach and four."

"How did he come, madame—the Comte de Sérizy?" the painter asked of Madame Moreau when she came back very much upset.

"I have no idea," said she. "I cannot account for his coming, nor guess what he has come for.—And Moreau is out!"

"His Excellency begs you will go over to the château, Monsieur Schinner," said a gardener coming to the door, "and he begs you will give him the pleasure of your company at dinner, as well as Monsieur Mistigris."

"Our goose is cooked!" said the lad with a laugh. "The man we took for a country worthy in Pierrotin's chaise was the Count. So true is it that what you seek you never bind."

Oscar was almost turning to a pillar of salt; for on hearing this, his throat felt as salt as the sea.

"And you! Who told him all about his wife's adorers and his skin disease?" said Mistigris to Oscar.

"What do you mean?" cried the steward's wife, looking at the two artists, who went off laughing at Oscar's face.

Oscar stood speechless, thunderstruck; hearing nothing, though Madame Moreau was questioning him and shaking him violently by one of his arms, which she had seized and clutched tightly; but she was obliged to leave him where he was without having extracted a reply, for Rosalie called her again to give out linen and silver-plate, and to request her to attend in person to the numerous orders given by the Count. The house-servants, the gardeners, everybody on the place, were rushing to and fro in such confusion as may be imagined.

The master had in fact dropped on the household like a shell from a mortar. From above la Cave the Count had made

his way by a path familiar to him to the gamekeeper's hut, and reached it before Moreau. The gamekeeper was amazed to see his real master.

"Is Moreau here, I see his horse waiting?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"No, monsiegneur; but as he is going over to les Moulineaux before dinner, he left his horse here while he ran across to give some orders at the house."

The gamekeeper had no idea of the effect of this reply, which, under existing circumstances, was, in the eyes of a clear-sighted man, tantamount to assurance.

"If you value your place," said the Count to the keeper, "ride as fast as you can pelt to Beaumont on this horse, and deliver to Monsieur Margueron a note I will give you."

The Count went into the man's lodge, wrote a line, folded it in such a manner that it could not be opened without detection, and gave it to the man as soon as he was in the saddle.

"Not a word to any living soul," said he. "And you, madame," he added to the keeper's wife, "if Moreau is surprised at not finding his horse, tell him that I took it."

And the Count went off across the park, through the gate which was opened for him at his nod.

Inured though a man may be to the turmoil of political life, with its excitement and vicissitudes, the soul of a man who, at the Count's age, is still firm enough to love, is also young enough to feel a betrayal. It was so hard to believe that Moreau was deceiving him, that at Saint-Brice Monsieur de Sérizy had supposed him to be not so much in league with Léger and the notary as, in fact, led away by them. And so, standing in the inn gateway, as he heard Père Léger talking to the innkeeper, he intended to forgive his land-steward after a severe reproof.

And then, strange to say, the dishonesty of his trusted agent had seemed no more than an episode when Oscar had blurted out the noble infirmities of the intrepid traveler, the Minister of Napoleon. Secrets so strictly kept could only have been revealed by Moreau, who had no doubt spoken contemptuously

of his benefactor to Madame de Sérizy's maid, or to the erewhile Aspasia of the Directoire.

As he made his way down the cross-road to the château, the peer of France, the great minister, had shed bitter tears, weeping as a boy weeps. They were his last tears that he shed! Every human feeling at once was so cruelly, so mercilessly attacked, that this self-controlled man rushed on across his park like a hunted animal.

When Moreau asked for his horse, and the keeper's wife replied:

"Monsieur le Comte has just taken it."

"Who—Monsieur le Comte?" cried he.

"Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy, the master," said she. "Perhaps he is at the château," added she, to get rid of the steward, who, quite bewildered by this occurrence, went off towards the house.

But he presently returned to question the keeper's wife, for it had struck him that there was some serious motive for his master's secret arrival and unwonted conduct. The woman, terrified at finding herself in a vise, as it were, between the Count and the steward, had shut herself into her lodge, quite determined only to open the door to her husband. Moreau, more and more uneasy, hurried across to the gatekeeper's lodge, where he was told that the Count was dressing. Rosalie, whom he met, announced: "Seven people to dine at the Count's table."

Moreau next went home, where he found the poultry-girl in hot discussion with an odd-looking young man.

"Monsieur le Comte told us, 'Mina's aide-de-camp and a colonel," the girl insisted.

"I am not a colonel," replied Georges.

"Well, but is your name Georges?"

"What is the matter?" asked the steward, intervening.

"Monsieur, my name is Georges Marest; I am the son of a rich hardware dealer, wholesale, in the Rue Saint-Martin, and I have come on business to Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy from Maître Crottat, his notary—I am his second clerk."

"And I can only repeat, sir, what monsieur said to me—'A gentleman will come,' says he, 'a Colonel Czerni-Georges, aide-de-camp to Mina, who traveled down in Pierrotin's chaise. If he asks for me, show him into the drawing-room.' "

"There is no joking with his Excellency," said the steward. "You had better go in, monsieur.—But how is it that his Excellency came down without announcing his purpose? And how does he know that you traveled by Pierrotin's chaise?"

"It is perfectly clear," said the clerk, "that the Count is the gentleman who, but for the civility of a young man, would have had to ride on the front seat of Pierrotin's coucou."

"On the front seat of Pierrotin's coucou?" cried the steward and the farm-girl.

"I am quite sure of it from what this girl tells me," said Georges Marest.

"But how——?" the steward began.

"Ah, there you are!" cried Georges. "To humbug the other travelers, I told them a heap of cock-and-bull stories about Egypt, Greece, and Spain. I had spurs on, and I gave myself out as a colonel in the cavalry—a mere joke."

"And what was the gentleman like, whom you believe to be the Count?" asked Moreau.

"Why, he has a face the color of brick," said Georges, "with perfectly white hair and black eyebrows."

"That is the man!"

"I am done for!" said Georges Marest.

"Why?"

"I made fun of his Orders."

"Pooh, he is a thorough good fellow; you will have amused him. Come to the château forthwith," said Moreau. "I am going up to the Count.—Where did he leave you?"

"At the top of the hill."

"I can make neither head nor tail of it!" cried Moreau.

"After all, I poked fun at him, but I did not insult him," said the clerk to himself.

"And what are you here for?" asked the steward.

"I have brought the deed of sale of the farm-lands of les Moulineaux, ready made out."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Moreau. "I don't understand!"

Moreau felt his heart beat painfully when, after knocking two raps on his master's door, he heard in reply:

"Is that you, Monsieur Moreau?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Come in."

The Count was dressed in white trousers and thin boots, a white waistcoat, and a black coat on which glittered, on the right-hand side, the star of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, and on the left, from a button-hole, hung that of the Golden Fleece from a gold chain; the blue ribbon was conspicuous across his waistcoat. He had dressed his hair himself, and had no doubt got himself up to do the honors of Presles to Margueron, and, perhaps, to impress that worthy with the atmosphere of grandeur.

"Well, monsieur," said the Count, who remained sitting, but allowed Moreau to stand, "so we cannot come to terms with Margueron?"

"At the present moment he wants too much for his farm."

"But why should he not come over here to talk about it?" said the Count in an absent-minded way.

"He is ill, monseigneur——"

"Are you sure?"

"I went over there——"

"Monsieur," said the Count, assuming a stern expression that was terrible, "what would you do to a man whom you had allowed to see you dress a wound you wished to keep secret, and who went off to make game of it with a street trollop?"

"I should give him a sound thrashing."

"And if, in addition to this, you discovered that he was cheating your confidence and robbing you?"

"I should try to catch him out and send him to the hulks."

"Listen, Monsieur Moreau. You have, I suppose, discussed my health with Madame Clapart and made fun at her house of my devotion to my wife, for little Husson was giving to the passengers in a public conveyance a vast deal of informa-

tion with reference to my cures, in my presence, this very morning, and in what words! God knows! He dared to slander my wife.

"Again, I heard from Farmer Léger's own lips, as he returned from Paris in Pierrotin's chaise, of the plan concocted by the notary of Beaumont with him, and with you, with reference to les Moulineaux. If you have been at all to see Margueron, it was to instruct him to sham illness; he is so little ill that I expect him to dinner, and he is coming.—Well, monsieur, as to your having made a fortune of two hundred and fifty thousand francs in seventeen years—I forgive you. I understand it. If you had but asked me for what you took from me, or what others offered you, I would have given it to you; you have a family to provide for. Even with your want of delicacy you have treated me better than another might have done, that I believe——

"But that you, who know all that I have done for my country, for France, you who have seen me sit up a hundred nights and more to work for the Emperor, or toiling eighteen hours a day for three months on end; that you, who know my worship of Madame de Sérizy, should have gossiped about it before a boy, have betrayed my secrets to the mockery of a Madame Husson——"

"Monseigneur!"

"It is unpardonable. To damage a man's interest is nothing, but to strike at his heart!—Ah! you do not know what you have done!"

The Count covered his face with his hands and was silent for a moment.

"I leave you in possession of what you have," he went on, "and I will forget you.—As a point of dignity, of honor, we will part without quarreling, for, at this moment, I can remember what your father did for mine.

"You must come to terms—good terms—with Monsieur de Reybert, your successor. Be calm, as I am. Do not make yourself a spectacle for fools. Above all, no bluster and no haggling. Though you have forfeited my confidence, try to

preserve the decorum of wealth.—As to the little wretch who has half killed me, he is not to sleep at Presles. Send him to the inn; I cannot answer for what I might do if he crossed my path."

"I do not deserve such leniency, monseigneur," said Moreau, with tears in his eyes. "If I had been utterly dishonest I should have five hundred thousand francs; and indeed I will gladly account for every franc in detail!—But permit me to assure you, monseigneur, that when I spoke of you to Madame Clapart it was never in derision. On the contrary, it was to deplore your condition and to ask her whether she did not know of some remedy, unfamiliar to the medical profession, which the common people use.—I have spoken of you in the boy's presence when he was asleep—but he heard me, it would seem!—and always in terms of the deepest affection and respect. Unfortunately, a blunder is sometimes punished as a crime. Still, while I bow to the decisions of your just anger, I would have you to know what really happened. Yes, it was heart to heart that I spoke of you to Madame Clapart. And only ask my wife; never have I mentioned these matters to her——"

"That will do," said the Count, whose conviction was complete. "We are not children; the past is irrevocable. . . . Go and set your affairs and mine in order. You may remain in the lodge till the month of October. Monsieur and Madame de Reybert will live in the château. Above all, try to live with them as gentlemen should—hating each other, but keeping up appearances."

The Count and Moreau went downstairs, Moreau as white as the Count's hair, Monsieur de Sérizy calm and dignified.

While this scene was going forward, the Beaumont coach, leaving Paris at one o'clock, had stopped at the gate of Presles to set down Maître Crottat, who, in obedience to the Count's orders, was shown into the drawing-room to wait for him; there he found his clerk excessively crestfallen, in company with the two painters, all three conspicuously uncomfortable.

Monsieur de Reybert, a man of fifty, with a very surly expression, had brought with him old Margueron and the notary from Beaumont, who held a bundle of leases and title-deeds.

When this assembled party saw the Count appear in full court costume, Georges Marest had a spasm in the stomach, and Joseph Bridau felt a qualm; but Mistigris, who was himself in his Sunday clothes, and who indeed had no crime on his conscience, said loud enough to be heard:

"Well, he looks much nicer now."

"You little rascal," said the Count, drawing him towards him by one ear, "so we both deal in decorations!—Do you recognize your work, my dear Schinner?" he went on, pointing to the ceiling.

"Monseigneur," said the artist, "I was so foolish as to assume so famous a name out of bravado; but to-day's experience makes it incumbent on me to do something good and win glory for that of Joseph Bridau."

"You took my part," said the Count eagerly, "and I hope you will do me the pleasure of dining with me—you and your witty Mistigris."

"You do not know what you are exposing yourself to," said the audacious youngster; "an empty stomach knows no peers."

"Bridau," said the Count, struck by a sudden reminiscence, "are you related to one of the greatest workers under the Empire, a brigadier in command who died a victim to his zeal?"

"I am his son, monseigneur," said Joseph, bowing.

"Then you are welcome here," replied the Count, taking the artist's hand in both his own; "I knew your father, and you may depend on me as on—an American uncle," said Monsieur de Sérizy, smiling. "But you are too young to have a pupil—to whom does Mistigris belong?"

"To my friend Schinner, who has lent him to me," replied Joseph. "Mistigris' name is Léon de Lora. Monseigneur, if you remember my father, will you condescend to bear in mind his other son, who stands accused of conspiring against the State, and is on his trial before the Supreme Court——"

"To be sure," said the Count. "I will bear it in mind, be-

lieve me.—As to Prince Czerni-Georges, Ali Pasha's ally, and Mina's aide-de-camp——" said the Count, turning to Georges.

"He?—my second clerk?" cried Crottat.

"You are under a mistake, Maître Crottat," said Monsieur de Sérizy, very severely. "A clerk who hopes ever to become a notary does not leave important documents in a diligence at the mercy of his fellow-travelers! A clerk who hopes to become a notary does not spend twenty francs between Paris and Moisselles! A clerk who hopes to become a notary does not expose himself to arrest as a deserter——"

"Monseigneur," said Georges Marest, "I may have amused myself by playing a practical joke on a party of travelers, but——"

"Do not interrupt his Excellency," said his master, giving him a violent nudge in the ribs.

"A notary ought to develop early the gifts of discretion, prudence, and discernment, and not mistake a Minister of State for a candlemaker."

"I accept sentence for my errors," said Georges, "but I did not leave my papers at the mercy——"

"You are at this moment committing the error of giving the lie to a Minister of State, a peer of France, a gentleman, an old man—and a client.—Look for your deed of sale."

The clerk turned over the papers in his portfolio.

"Do not make a mess of your papers," said the Count, taking the document out of his pocket. "Here is the deed you are seeking."

Crottat turned it over three times, so much was he amazed at receiving it from the hands of his noble client.

"What, sir!"—he at last began, addressing Georges.

"If I had not taken it," the Count went on, "Père Léger—who is not such a fool as you fancy him from his questions as to agriculture, since they might have taught you that a man should always be thinking of his business—Père Léger might have got hold of it and discovered my plans.—You also will give me the pleasure of your company at dinner, but on condition of telling us the history of the Moslem's execution at

Smyrna, and of finishing the memoirs of some client which you read, no doubt, before publication."

"A trouncing for bouncing," said Léon de Lora, in a low voice to Joseph Bridau.

"Gentlemen," said the Count to the notary from Beaumont, to Crottat, Margueron, and Reybert, "come into the other room. We will not sit down to dinner till we have concluded our bargain; for, as my friend Mistigris says, we must know when to *creep* silent."

"Well, he is a thoroughly good fellow," said Léon de Lora to Georges Marest.

"Yes; but if he is a good fellow, my governor is not, and he will request me to play my tricks elsewhere."

"Well, you like traveling," said Bridau.

"What a dressing that boy will get from Monsieur and Madame Moreau!" cried Léon de Lora.

"The little idiot!" said Georges. "But for him the Count would have thought it all very good fun. Well, well, it is a useful lesson, and if I am caught chattering in a coach again——"

"Oh, it is a stupid thing to do," said Joseph Bridau.

"And vulgar too," said Mistigris. "Keep your tongue to clean your teeth."

While the business of the farm was being discussed between Monsieur Margueron and the Comte de Sérizy, with the assistance of three notaries, and in the presence of Monsieur de Reybert, Moreau was slowly making his way home. He went in without looking about him, and sat down on a sofa in the drawing-room, while Oscar Husson crept into a corner out of sight, so terrified was he by the steward's white face.

"Well, my dear," said Estelle, coming in, fairly tired out by all she had had to do, "what is the matter?"

"My dear, we are ruined, lost beyond redemption. I am no longer land-steward of Presles! The Count has withdrawn his confidence."

"And what has caused——?"

"Old Léger, who was in Pierrotin's chaise, let out all about

the farm of les Moulineaux; but it is not that which has cut me off for ever from his favor——"

"What, then?"

"Oscar spoke ill of the Countess, and talked of monseigneur's ailments——"

"Oscar?" cried Madame Moreau. "You are punished by your own act! A pretty viper you have nursed in your bosom! How often have I told you——"

"That will do," said Moreau hoarsely.

At this instant Estelle and her husband detected Oscar huddled in a corner. Moreau pounced on the luckless boy like a kite on its prey, seized him by the collar of his olive-green coat, and dragged him into the daylight of a window.

"Speak! What did you say to monseigneur in the coach? What devil loosened your tongue, when you always stand moonstruck if I ask you a question? What did you do it for?" said the steward with terrific violence.

Oscar, too much scared for tears, kept silence, as motionless as a statue.

"Come and ask his Excellency's pardon!" said Moreau.

"As if his Excellency cared about a vermin like him!" shrieked Estelle in a fury.

"Come—come to the château!" Moreau repeated.

Oscar collapsed, a lifeless heap on the floor.

"Will you come, I say?" said Moreau, his rage increasing every moment.

"No, no; have pity!" cried Oscar, who could not face a punishment worse than death.

Moreau took the boy by the collar and dragged him like a corpse across the courtyard, which rang with the boy's cries and sobs; he hauled him up the steps and flung him howling, and as rigid as a post, in the drawing-room at the feet of the Count, who, having settled for the purchase of les Moulineaux, was just passing into the dining-room with his friends.

"On your knees, on your knees, wretched boy. Ask pardon of the man who has fed your mind by getting you a scholarship at college," cried Moreau.

Oscar lay with his face on the ground, foaming with rage. Everybody was startled. Moreau, quite beside himself, was purple in the face from the rush of blood to his head.

"This boy is mere vanity," said the Count, after waiting in vain for Oscar's apology. "Pride can humble itself, for there is dignity in some self-humiliation.—I am afraid you will never make anything of this fellow."

And the Minister passed on.

Moreau led Oscar away and back to his own house.

While the horses were being harnessed to the traveling chaise, he wrote the following letter to Madame Clapart:—

"Oscar, my dear, has brought me to ruin. In the course of his journey in Pierrotin's chaise this morning he spoke of the flirtations of Madame la Comtesse to his Excellency himself, who was traveling incognito, and told the Count his own secrets as to the skin disease brought on by long nights of hard work in his various high offices.—After dismissing me from my place, the Count desired me not to allow Oscar to sleep at Presles, but to send him home. In obedience to his orders, I am having my horses put to my wife's carriage, and Brochon, my groom, will take the little wretch home.

"My wife and I are in a state of despair, which you may imagine, but which I cannot attempt to describe. I will go to see you in a few days, for I must make my plans. I have three children; I must think of the future, and I do not yet know what to decide on, for I am determined to show the Count the value of seventeen years of the life of such a man as I. I have two hundred and sixty thousand francs, and I mean to acquire such a fortune as will allow me to be, some day, not much less than his Excellency's equal. At this instant I feel that I could remove mountains and conquer insurmountable difficulties. What a lever is such a humiliating scene!——

"Whose blood can Oscar have in his veins? I cannot compliment you on your son; his behavior is that of an owl. At this moment of writing he has not yet uttered a word in reply to my questions and my wife's. Is he becoming idiotic, or is

he idiotic already? My dear friend, did you not give him due injunctions before he started? How much misfortune you would have spared me by coming with him, as I begged you. If you were afraid of Estelle, you could have stayed at Moisselles. However, it is all over now. Farewell till we meet, soon.—Your faithful friend and servant,

"MOREAU."

At eight o'clock that evening Madame Clapart had come in from a little walk with her husband, and sat knitting stockings for Oscar by the light of a single dip. Monsieur Clapart was expecting a friend named Poiret, who sometimes came in for a game of dominoes, for he never trusted himself to spend an evening in a café. In spite of temperance, enforced on him by his narrow means, Clapart could not have answered for his abstinence when in the midst of food and drink, and surrounded by other men, whose laughter might have nettled him.

"I am afraid Poiret may have been and gone," said he to his wife.

"The lodge-keeper would have told us, my dear," replied his wife.

"She may have forgotten."

"Why should she forget?"

"It would not be the first time she has forgotten things that concern us; God knows, anything is good enough for people who have no servants!"

"Well, well," said the poor woman, to change the subject and escape her husband's pin-stabs. "Oscar is at Presles by this time; he will be very happy in that beautiful place, that fine park——"

"Oh yes, expect great things!" retorted Clapart. "He will make hay there with a vengeance!"

"Will you never cease to be spiteful to that poor boy? What harm has he done you? Dear Heaven! if ever we are in easy circumstances we shall owe it to him perhaps, for he has a good heart."

"Our bones will be gelatine long before that boy succeeds in the world!" said Clapart. "And he will have altered very considerably!—Why, you don't know your own boy; he is a braggart, a liar, lazy, incapable——"

"Supposing you were to go to fetch Poiret," said the hapless mother, struck to the heart by the diatribe she had brought down on her own head.

"A boy who never took a prize at school!" added Clapart.

In the eyes of the commoner sort, bringing home prizes from school is positive proof of future success in life.

"Did you ever take a prize?" retorted his wife. "And Oscar got the fourth *accessit* in philosophy?"

This speech reduced Clapart to silence for a moment.

"And besides," he presently went on, "Madame Moreau must love him as she loves a nail—you know where; she will try to set her husband against him.—Oscar steward at Presles! Why, he must understand land-surveying and agriculture——"

"He can learn."

"He! Never! I bet you that if he got a place there he would not be in it a week before he had done something clumsy, and was packed off by the Comte de Sérizy——"

"Good heavens! How can you be so vicious about the future prospects of a poor boy, full of good points, as sweet as an angel, and incapable of doing an ill turn to any living soul?"

At this moment the cracking of a post-boy's whip and the clatter of a chaise at top speed, with the hoofs of horses pulled up sharply at the outer gate, had roused the whole street. Clapart, hearing every window flung open, went out on the landing.

"Oscar, sent back by post!" cried he in a tone in which his satisfaction gave way to genuine alarm.

"Good God! what can have happened?" said the poor mother, trembling as a leaf is shaken by an autumn wind.

Brochon came upstairs, followed by Oscar and Poiret.

"Good heavens, what has happened?" repeated she, appealing to the groom.

"I don't know, but Monsieur Moreau is no longer steward of Presles, and they say it is your son's doing, and monseigneur has ordered him home again.—However, here is a letter from poor Monsieur Moreau, who is so altered, madame, it is dreadful to see."

"Clapart, a glass of wine for the post-boy, and one for monsieur," said his wife, who dropped into an armchair and read the terrible letter. "Oscar," she went on, dragging herself to her bed, "you want to kill your mother!—After all I said to you this morning——" But Madame Clapart did not finish her sentence; she fainted with misery.

Oscar remained standing, speechless. Madame Clapart, as she recovered her senses, heard her husband saying to the boy as he shook him by the arm:

"Will you speak?"

"Go to bed at once, sir," said she to her son. "And leave him in peace, Monsieur Clapart; do not drive him out of his wits, for he is dreadfully altered!"

Oscar did not hear his mother's remark; he had made for bed the instant he was told.

Those who have any recollection of their own boyhood will not be surprised to hear that, after a day so full of events and agitations, Oscar slept the sleep of the just in spite of the enormity of his sins. Nay, next day he did not find the whole face of nature so much changed as he expected, and was astonished to find that he was hungry, after regarding himself the day before as unworthy to live. He had suffered only in mind, and at that age mental impressions succeed each other so rapidly that each wipes out the last, however deep it may have seemed.

Hence corporal punishment, though philanthropists have made a strong stand against it of late years, is in some cases necessary for children; also, it is perfectly natural, for Nature herself has no other means but the infliction of pain to produce a lasting impression of her lessons. If to give weight to the shame, unhappily too transient, which had overwhelmed Oscar, the steward had given him a sound thrashing, the les-

son might have been effectual. The discernment needed for the proper infliction of such corrections is the chief argument against their use; for Nature never makes a mistake, while the teacher must often blunder.

Madame Clapart took care to send her husband out next morning to have her son to herself. She was in a pitiable condition. Her eyes red with weeping, her face worn by a sleepless night, her voice broken; everything in her seemed to sue for mercy by the signs of such grief as she could not have endured a second time. When Oscar entered the room, she beckoned to him to sit down by her, and in a mild but feeling voice reminded him of all the kindness done them by the steward of Presles. She explained to Oscar that for the last six years especially she had lived on Moreau's ingenious charity. Monsieur Clapart's appointment, which they owed, no less than Oscar's scholarship, to the Comte de Sérizy, he would some day cease to hold. Clapart could not claim a pension, not having served long enough either in the Treasury or the city to ask for one. And when Monsieur Clapart should be shelved, what was to become of them?

"I," she said, "by becoming a sick-nurse or taking a place as housekeeper in some gentleman's house, could make my living and keep Monsieur Clapart; but what would become of you? You have no fortune, and you must work for your living. There are but four openings for lads like you—trade, the civil service, the liberal professions, and military service. A young man who has no capital must contribute faithful service and brains; but great discretion is needed in business, and your behavior yesterday makes your success very doubtful. For an official career you have to begin, for years perhaps, as a supernumerary, and need interest to back you; and you have alienated the only protector we ever had—a man high in power. And besides, even if you were blest with the exceptional gifts which enable a young man to rise rapidly, either in business or in an official position, where are we to find the money for food and clothing while you are learning your work?"

And here his mother, like all women, went off into wordy lamentations. What could she do now that she was deprived of the gifts of produce which Moreau was able to send her while managing Presles? Oscar had overthrown his best friend.

Next to trade and office work, of which her son need not even think, came the legal profession as a notary, a pleader, an attorney, or an usher. But then he must study law for three years at least, and pay heavy fees for his admission, his examinations, his *theses,* and diploma; the number of competitors was so great, that superior talent was indispensable, and how was he to live? That was the constantly recurring question.

"Oscar," she said in conclusion, "all my pride, all my life were centered in you. I could bear to look forward to an old age of poverty, for I kept my eyes on you; I saw you entering on a prosperous career, and succeeding in it. That hope has given me courage to endure the privations I have gone through during the last six years to keep you at school, for it has cost seven or eight hundred francs a year besides the half-scholarship. Now that my hopes are crushed, I dread to think of your future fate. I must not spend a sou of Monsieur Clapart's salary on my own son.

"What do you propose to do. You are not a good enough mathematician to pass into a specialist college; and, besides, where could I find the three thousand francs a year for your training?—This is life, my dear child! Well, you are eighteen, and a strong lad—enlist as a soldier; it is the only way you can make a living."

Oscar as yet knew nothing of life. Like all boys who have been brought up in ignorance of the poverty at home, he had no idea of the need to work for his living; the word *trade* conveyed no idea to his mind; and the words *Government office* did not mean much, for he knew nothing of the work. He listened with a look of submission, which he tried to make penitential, but his mother's remonstrances were lost in air. However, at the idea of being a soldier, and on seeing the

tears in his mother's eyes, the boy too was ready to weep. As soon as Madame Clapart saw the drops on her boy's cheeks, she was quite disarmed; and, like all mothers in a similar position, she fell back on the generalities which wind up this sort of attack, in which they suffer all their own sorrows and their children's at the same time.

"Come, Oscar, promise me to be more cautious for the future, not to blurt out whatever comes uppermost, to moderate your absurd conceit——" and so on.

Oscar was ready to promise all his mother asked, and pressing him gently to her heart, Madame Clapart ended by embracing him to comfort him for the scolding he had had.

"Now," said she, "you will listen to your mother and follow her advice, for a mother can give her son none but good advice.—We will go and see your uncle Cardot. He is our last hope. Cardot owed a great deal to your father, who, by allowing him to marry his sister, with what was then an immense marriage portion, enabled him to make a large fortune in silk. I fancy he would place you with Monsieur Camusot, his son-in-law and successor in the Rue des Bourdonnais.

"Still, your uncle Cardot has four children of his own. He made over his shop, the *Cocon d'Or,* to his eldest daughter, Madame Camusot. Though Cardot has millions, there are the four children, by two wives, and he hardly knows of our existence. Marianne, his second girl, married Monsieur Protez, of Protez and Chiffreville. He paid four hundred thousand francs to put his eldest son in business as a notary; and he has just invested for his second son Joseph as a partner in the business of Matifat, drug-importers. Thus your uncle Cardot may very well not choose to be troubled about you, whom he sees but four times a year. He has never been to call on me here; but he could come to see me when I was in *Madame Mère's* household, to be allowed to supply silks to their Imperial Highnesses, and the Emperor, and the Grandees at Court.—And now the Camusots are *Ultras!* Camusot's eldest son, by his first wife, married the daughter of a gentleman usher to the King! Well, when the world stoops it grows hunch-

backed. And, after all, it is a good business; the *Cocon d'Or* has the custom of the Court under the Bourbons as it had under the Emperor.

"To-morrow we will go to see your uncle Cardot, and I hope you will contrive to behave; for, as I tell you, in him is our last hope."

Monsieur Jean Jérôme Séverin Cardot had lost his second wife six years since—Mademoiselle Husson, on whom, in the days of his glory, the contractor had bestowed a marriage portion of a hundred thousand francs in hard cash. Cardot, the head-clerk of the *Cocon d'Or,* one of the old-established Paris houses, had bought the business in 1793 when its owners were ruined by the *maximum,* and Mademoiselle Husson's money to back him had enabled him to make an almost colossal fortune in ten years. To provide handsomely for his children, he had very ingeniously invested three hundred thousand francs in annuities for himself and his wife, which brought him in thirty thousand francs a year. The rest of his capital he divided into three portions of four hundred thousand francs for his younger children, and the shop was taken as representing that sum by Camusot when he married the eldest girl. Thus the old fellow, now nearly seventy, could dispose of his thirty thousand francs a year without damaging his children's interests; they were all well married, and no avaricious hopes could interfere with their filial affection.

Uncle Cardot lived at Belleville in one of the first houses just above la Courtille. He rented a first floor, whence there was a fine view over the Seine valley, an apartment for which he paid a thousand francs a year, facing south, with the exclusive enjoyment of a large garden; thus he never troubled himself about the three or four other families inhabiting the spacious country house. Secure, by a long lease, of ending his days there, he lived rather shabbily, waited on by his old cook and by a maid who had been attached to his late wife, both of whom looked forward to an annuity of some six hun-

dred francs at his death, and consequently did not rob him. These two women took incredible care of their master, and with all the more devotion since no one could be less fractious or fidgety than he.

The rooms, furnished by the late Madame Cardot, had remained unaltered for six years, and the old man was quite content; he did not spend a thousand crowns a year there, for he dined out in Paris five days a week, and came home at midnight in a private fly that he took at the Barrière de la Courtille. They had hardly anything to do beyond providing him with breakfast. The old man breakfasted at eleven o'clock, then he dressed and scented himself and went to Paris. A man usually gives notice when he means to dine out; Monsieur Cardot gave notice when he was to dine at home.

This little old gentleman, plump, rosy, square, and hearty, was always as neat as a pin, as the saying goes, that is to say, always in black silk stockings, corded silk knee-breeches, a white marcella waistcoat, dazzlingly white linen, and a dark blue coat; he wore violet silk gloves, gold buckles to his shoes, and breeches, a touch of powder on his hair, and a small queue tied with black ribbon. His face was noticeable for the thick, bushy eyebrows, beneath which sparkled his gray eyes, and a large squarely-cut nose that made him look like some venerable prebendary. This countenance did not belie the man. Old Cardot was, in fact, one of the race of frisky *Gérontes* who are disappearing day by day, and who played the part of Turcaret in all the romances and comedies of the eighteenth century. Uncle Cardot would speak to a woman as "Lady fair"; he would take home any woman in a coach who had no other protector; he was "theirs to command," to use his own expression, with a chivalrous flourish. His calm face and snowy hair were the adjuncts of an old age wholly devoted to pleasure. Among men he boldly professed Epicureanism, and allowed himself rather a broad style of jokes. He had made no objection when his son-in-law Camusot attached himself to Coralie, the fascinating actress, for he was, in secret, the Mæcenas of Mademoiselle Florentine, *première danseuse* at the Gaîté theatre.

Still, nothing appeared on the surface, or in his evident conduct, to tell tales of these opinions and this mode of life. Uncle Cardot, grave and polite, was supposed to be almost cold, such a display did he make of the proprieties, and even a bigot would have called him a hypocrite. This worthy gentleman particularly detested the priesthood, he was one of the large body of silly people who subscribe to the *Constitutionnel,* and was much exercised about the refusal of rights of burial. He adored Voltaire, though his preference as a matter of taste was for Piron, Verdé, and Collé. Of course, he admired Béranger, of whom he spoke ingeniously as the *high priest of the religion of Lisette.* His daughters, Madame Camusot and Madame Protez, and his two sons would indeed have been knocked flat, to use a vulgar phrase, if any one had told them what their father meant by singing *"La Mère Godichon."*

This shrewd old man had never told his children of his annuity; and they, seeing him live so poorly, all believed that he had stripped himself of his fortune for them, and overwhelmed him with care and affection. And he would sometimes say to his sons, "Do not lose your money, for I have none to leave you." Camusot, who was a man after his own heart, and whom he liked well enough to allow him to join his little parties, was the only one who knew of his annuity of thirty thousand francs. Camusot highly applauded the old fellow's philosophy, thinking that after providing so liberally for his children and doing his duty so thoroughly, he had a right to end his days jovially.

"You see, my dear fellow," the old master of the *Cocon d'Or* would say to his son-in-law, "I might have married again, no doubt, and a young wife would have had children.—Oh, yes, I should have had children, I was at an age when men always have children.—Well, Florentine does not cost me so much as a wife, she never bores me, she will not plague me with children, and will not make a hole in your fortune." And Camusot discovered in old Cardot an admirable feeling for the Family, regarding him as a perfect father-in-law. "He succeeds," he would say, "in reconciling the interests of his chil-

dren with the pleasures it is natural to indulge in in old age after having gone through all anxieties of business."

Neither the Cardots, nor the Camusots, nor the Protez suspected what the existence was of their old aunt Madame Clapart. Their communications had always been restricted to sending formal letters on the occasions of a death or a marriage, and visiting cards on New Year's Day. Madame Clapart was too proud to sacrifice her feelings for anything but her Oscar's interests, and acted under the influence of her regard for Moreau, the only person who had remained faithful to her in misfortune. She had never wearied old Cardot by her presence or her importunities, but she had clung to him as to a hope. She called on him once a quarter, and talked to him of Oscar Husson, the nephew of the late respected Madame Cardot, taking the lad to see Uncle Cardot three times a year, in the holidays. On each occasion the old man took Oscar to dine at the *Cadran bleu* (the Blue Dial), and to the Gaîté in the evening, taking him home afterwards to the Rue de la Cerisaie. On one occasion, after giving him a new suit of clothes, he had made him a present of the silver mug and spoon and fork required as part of every schoolboy's equipment.

Oscar's mother had tried to convince the old man that Oscar was very fond of him, and she was always talking of the silver mug and spoon and the beautiful suit, of which nothing now survived but the waistcoat. But these little insinuating attentions did Oscar more harm than good with so cunning an old fox as Uncle Cardot. Old Cardot had not been devoted to his late lamented, a bony red-haired woman; also he knew the circumstances of the deceased Husson's marriage to Oscar's mother; and without looking down on her in any way, he knew that Oscar had been born after his father's death, so his poor nephew seemed an absolute alien to the Cardot family. Unable to foresee disaster, Oscar's mother had not made up for this lack of natural ties between the boy and his uncle, and had not succeeded in implanting in the old merchant any liking for her boy in his earliest youth. Like

all women who are absorbed in the one idea of motherhood, Madame Clapart could not put herself in Uncle Cardot's place; she thought he ought to be deeply interested in such a charming boy, whose name, too, was that of the late Madame Cardot.

"Monsieur, here is the mother of your nephew Oscar," said the maid to Monsieur Cardot, who was airing himself in the garden before breakfast, after being shaved and having his head dressed by the barber.

"Good-morning, lady fair," said the old silk-merchant, bowing to Madame Clapart, while he wrapped his white quilted dressing-gown across him. "Ah, ha! your youngster is growing apace," he added, pulling Oscar by the ear.

"He has finished his schooling, and he was very sorry that his dear uncle was not present at the distribution of prizes at the Collège Henri IV., for he was named. The name of Husson, of which, let us hope, he may prove worthy, was honorably mentioned."

"The deuce it was!" said the little man, stopping short. He was walking with Madame Clapart and Oscar on a terrace where there were orange-trees, myrtles, and pomegranate shrubs. "And what did he get?"

"The fourth *accessit* in philosophy," said the mother triumphantly.

"Oh, ho. He has some way to go yet to make up for lost time," cried Uncle Cardot. "To end with an *accessit*—is not the treasure of Peru.—You will breakfast with me?" said he.

"We are at your commands," replied Madame Clapart. "Oh, my dear Monsieur Cardot, what a comfort it is to a father and mother when their children make a good start in life. From that point of view, as indeed from every other," she put in, correcting herself, "you are one of the happiest fathers I know. In the hands of your admirable son-in-law and your amiable daughter, the *Cocon d'Or* is still the best shop of the kind in Paris. Your eldest son has been for years as a notary at the head of the best known business in Paris,

and he married a rich woman. Your youngest is a partner in a first-rate druggist's business. And you have the sweetest grandchildren! You are the head of four flourishing families.—Oscar, leave us; go and walk round the garden, and do not touch the flowers."

"Why, he is eighteen!" exclaimed Uncle Cardot, smiling at this injunction, "as though Oscar was a child!"

"Alas! indeed he is, my dear Monsieur Cardot; and after bringing him up to that age neither crooked nor bandy, sound in mind and body, after sacrificing everything to give him an education, it would be hard indeed not to see him start in the way to fortune."

"Well, Monsieur Moreau, who got you his half-scholarship at the Collège Henri IV., will start him in the right road," said Uncle Cardot, hiding his hypocrisy under an affectation of bluntness.

"Monsieur Moreau may die," said she. "Besides, he has quarreled beyond remedy with Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy, his patron."

"The deuce he has! Listen, madame, I see what you are coming to——"

"No, monsieur," said Oscar's mother, cutting the old man short; while he, out of respect for a "lady fair," controlled the impulse of annoyance at being interrupted. "Alas! you can know nothing of the anguish of a mother who for seven years has been obliged to take six hundred francs a year out of her husband's salary of eighteen hundred. Yes, monsieur, that is our whole income. So what can I do for my Oscar! Monsieur Clapart so intensely hates the poor boy, that I really cannot keep him at home. What can a poor woman do under such circumstances but come to consult the only relative her boy has under heaven?"

"You did quite right," replied Monsieur Cardot, "you never said anything of all this before——"

"Indeed, monsieur," replied Madame Clapart with pride, "you are the last person to whom I would confess the depth of my poverty. It is all my own fault; I married a man

whose incapacity is beyond belief. Oh! I am a most miserable woman."

"Listen, madame," said the little old man gravely. "Do not cry. I cannot tell you how much it pains me to see a fair lady in tears. After all, your boy's name is Husson; and if the dear departed were alive, she would do something for the sake of her father's and brother's name——"

"She truly loved her brother!" cried Oscar's mother.

"But all my fortune is divided among my children, who have nothing further to expect from me," the old man went on. "I divided the two million francs I had among them; I wished to see them happy in my lifetime. I kept nothing for myself but an annuity, and at my time of life a man clings to his habits.—Do you know what you must do with this youngster?" said he, calling back Oscar, and taking him by the arm. "Put him to study law, I will pay for his matriculation and preliminary fees. Place him with an attorney; let him learn all the tricks of the trade; if he does well, and gets on and likes the work, and if I am still alive, each of my children will, when the time comes, lend him a quarter of the sum necessary to purchase a connection; I will stand surety for him. From now till then you have only to feed and clothe him; he will know some hard times, no doubt, but he will learn what life is. Why, why! I set out from Lyons with two double louis given me by my grandmother; I came to Paris on foot—and here I am! Short commons are good for the health.—Young man, with discretion, honesty, and hard work success is certain. It is a great pleasure to make your own fortune; and when a man has kept his teeth, he eats what he likes in his old age, singing *La Mère Godichon* every now and then, as I do. —Mark my words: Honesty, hard work, and discretion."

"You hear, Oscar," said his mother. "Your uncle has put in four words the sum-total of all my teaching, and you ought to stamp the last on your mind in letters of fire."

"Oh, it is there!" replied Oscar.

"Well, then, thank your uncle; do you not understand that he is providing for you in the future? You may be an attorney in Paris."

"He does not appreciate the splendor of his destiny," said the old man, seeing Oscar's bewildered face. "He has but just left school.—Listen to me: I am not given to wasting words," his uncle went on. "Remember that at your age honesty is only secured by resisting temptations, and in a great city like Paris you meet them at every turn. Live in a garret under your mother's roof; go straight to your lecture, and from that to your office; work away morning, noon, and night, and study at home; be a second clerk by the time you are two-and-twenty, and a head-clerk at four-and-twenty. Get learning, and you are a made man. And then if you should not like that line of work, you might go into my son's office as a notary and succeed him.—So work, patience, honesty, and discretion—these are your watchwords."

"And God grant you may live another thirty years to see your fifth child realize all our expectations!" cried Madame Clapart, taking the old man's hand and pressing it with a dignity worthy of her young days.

"Come, breakfast," said the kind old man, leading Oscar in by the ear.

During the meal Uncle Cardot watched his nephew on the sly, and soon discovered that he knew nothing of life.

"Send him to see me now and then," said he, as he took leave of her, with a nod to indicate Oscar. "I will lick him into shape."

This visit soothed the poor woman's worst grief, for she had not looked for such a happy result. For a fortnight she took Oscar out walking, watched over him almost tyrannically, and thus time went on till the end of October.

One morning Oscar saw the terrible steward walk in to find the wretched party in the Rue de la Cerisaie breakfasting off a salad of herring and lettuce, with a cup of milk to wash it down.

"We have settled in Paris, but we do not live as we did at Presles," said Moreau, who intended thus to make Madame Clapart aware of the change in their circumstances, brought

about by Oscar's misdemeanor. "But I shall not often be in town. I have gone into partnership with old Léger and old Margueron of Beaumont. We are land agents, and we began by buying the estate of Persan. I am the head of the firm, which has got together a million of francs, for I have borrowed on my property. When I find an opening, Père Léger and I go into the matter, and my partners each take a quarter and I half of the profits, for I have all the trouble; I shall always be on the road.

"My wife lives in Paris very quietly, in the Faubourg du Roule. When we have fairly started in business, and shall only be risking the interest on our money, if we are satisfied with Oscar, we may perhaps give him work."

"Well, after all, my friend, my unlucky boy's blunder will no doubt turn out to be the cause of your making a fine fortune, for you really were wasting your talents and energy at Presles." Madame Clapart then told the story of her visit to Uncle Cardot, to show Moreau that she and her son might be no further expense to them.

"The old man is quite right," said the ex-steward. "Oscar must be kept to his work with a hand of iron, and he will no doubt make a notary or an attorney. But we must not wander from the line traced out for him.—Ah! I know the man you want. The custom of an estate agent is valuable. I have been told of an attorney who has bought a practice without any connection. He is a young man; but as stiff as an iron bar, a tremendous worker, a perfect horse for energy and go; his name is Desroches. I will offer him all our business on condition of his taking Oscar in hand. I will offer him a premium of nine hundred francs, of which I will pay three hundred; thus your son will cost you only six hundred, and I will recommend him strongly to his master. If the boy is ever to become a man, it will be under that iron rule, for he will come out a notary, a pleader, or an attorney."

"Come, Oscar, thank Monsieur Moreau for his kindness; you stand there like a mummy. It is not every youth who blunders that is lucky enough to find friends to take an interest in him after being injured by him——"

"The best way to make matters up with me," said Moreau, taking Oscar's hand, "is to work steadily and behave well."

Ten days after this Oscar was introduced by Monsieur Moreau to Maître Desroches, attorney, lately established in the Rue de Béthisy, in spacious rooms at the end of a narrow court, at a relatively low rent. Desroches, a young man of six-and-twenty, the son of poor parents, austerely brought up by an excessively severe father, had himself known what it was to be in Oscar's position; he therefore took an interest in him, but only in the way of which he was himself capable, with all the hardness of his character. The manner of this tall, lean young lawyer, with a dull complexion, and his hair cut short all over his head, sharp in his speech, keen-eyed, and gloomy though hasty, terrified poor Oscar.

"We work day and night here," said the lawyer from the depths of his chair, and from behind a long table, on which papers were piled in alps. "Monsieur Moreau, we will not kill him, but he will have to go our pace.—Monsieur Godeschal!" he called out.

Although it was Sunday, the head-clerk appeared with a pen in his hand.

"Monsieur Godeschal, this is the articled pupil of whom I spoke, and in whom Monsieur Moreau takes the greatest interest; he will dine with us, and sleep in the little attic next to your room. You must allow him exactly time enough to get to the law-schools and back, so that he has not five minutes to lose; see that he learns the Code, and does well at lecture; that is to say, give him law books to read up when he has done his school work. In short, he is to be under your immediate direction, and I will keep an eye on him. We want to turn him out what you are yourself—a capital head-clerk by the time he is ready to be sworn in as an attorney.—Go with Godeschal, my little friend; he will show you your room, and you can move into it."

"You see Godeschal?" Desroches went on, addressing Moreau. "He is a youngster without a sou, like myself; he is Mariette's brother, and she is saving for him, so that he may

buy a connection ten years hence.—All my clerks are youngsters, who have nothing to depend on but their ten fingers to make their fortune. And my five clerks and I work like any dozen of other men. In ten years I shall have the finest practice in Paris. We take a passionate interest here in our business and our clients, and that is beginning to be known. I got Godeschal from my greater brother in law, Derville; with him he was second clerk, and only for a fortnight; but we had made friends in that huge office.

"I give Godeschal a thousand francs a year, with board and lodging. The fellow is worth it to me; he is indefatigable! I like that boy! He managed to live on six hundred francs a year, as I did when I was a clerk. What I absolutely insist on is stainless honesty, and the man who can practice it in poverty *is* a man. The slightest failing on that score, and a clerk of mine goes!"

"Come, the boy is in a good school," said Moreau.

For two whole years Oscar lived in the Rue de Béthisy, in a den of the law; for if ever this old-fashioned term could be applied to a lawyer's office, it was to this of Desroches. Under this minute and strict supervision, he was kept so rigidly to hours and to work, that his life in the heart of Paris was like that of a monk.

At five in the morning, in all weathers, Godeschal woke. He went down to the office with Oscar, to save a fire, and they always found the "chief" up and at work. Oscar did the errands and prepared his school-work—studies on an enormous scale. Godeschal, and often the chief himself, showed their pupil what authors to compare, and the difficulties to be met. Oscar never was allowed to pass from one chapter of the Code to the next till he had thoroughly mastered it, and had satisfied both Desroches and Godeschal, who put him through preliminary examinations, far longer and harder than those of the law schools.

On his return from the schools, where he did not spend much time, he resumed his seat in the office and worked again; sometimes he went into the Courts, and he was at the bidding

of the merciless Godeschal till dinner-time. Dinner, which he shared with his masters, consisted of a large dish of meat, a dish of vegetables, and a salad; for dessert there was a bit of Gruyère cheese. After dinner, Godeschal and Oscar went back to the office, and worked there till the evening.

Once a month Oscar went to breakfast with his Uncle Cardot, and he spent the Sundays with his mother. Moreau from time to time, if he came to the office on business, would take the boy to dine at the Palais-Royal, and treat him to the play. Oscar had been so thoroughly snubbed by Godeschal and Desroches on the subject of his craving after fashion, that he had ceased to think about dress.

"A good clerk," said Godeschal, "should have two black coats—one old and one new—black trousers, black stockings and shoes. Boots cost too much. You may have boots when you are an attorney. A clerk ought not to spend more than seven hundred francs in all. He should wear good, strong shirts of stout linen.—Oh, when you start from zero to make a fortune, you must know how to limit yourself to what is strictly needful. Look at Monsieur Desroches! He did as we are doing, and you see he has succeeded."

Godeschal practised what he preached. Professing the strictest principles of honor, reticence, and honesty, he acted on them without any display, as simply as he walked and breathed. It was the natural working of his soul, as walking and breathing are the working of certain organs.

Eighteen months after Oscar's arrival, the second clerk had made, for the second time, a small mistake in the accounts of his little cash-box. Godeschal addressed him in the presence of all the clerks:

"My dear Gaudet, leave on your own account, that it may not be said that the chief turned you out. You are either inaccurate or careless, and neither of those faults is of any use here. The chief shall not know, and that is the best I can do for an old fellow-clerk."

Thus, at the age of twenty, Oscar was third clerk in Maître Desroches' office. Though he earned no salary yet,

he was fed and lodged, for he did the work of a second clerk. Desroches employed two managing clerks, and the second clerk was overdone with work. By the time he had got through his second year at the schools, Oscar, who knew more than many a man who has taken out his license, did the work of the Courts very intelligently, and occasionally pleaded in chambers. In fact, Desroches and Godeschal were satisfied.

Still, though he had become almost sensible, he betrayed a love of pleasure and a desire to shine, which were only subdued by the stern discipline and incessant toil of the life he led. The estate agent, satisfied with the boy's progress, then relaxed his strictness; and when, in the month of July 1825, Oscar passed his final examination, Moreau gave him enough money to buy some good clothes. Madame Clapart, very happy and proud of her son, prepared a magnificent outfit for the qualified attorney, the second clerk, as he was soon to be. In poor families a gift always takes the form of something useful.

When the Courts re-opened in the month of November, Oscar took the second clerk's room and his place, with a salary of eight hundred francs, board and lodging. And Uncle Cardot, who came privately to make inquiries about his nephew of Desroches, promised Madame Clapart that he would put Oscar in a position to buy a connection if he went on as he had begun.

In spite of such seeming wisdom, Oscar Husson was torn by many yearnings in the bottom of his soul. Sometimes he felt as if he must fly from a life so entirely opposed to his taste and character; a galley slave, he thought, was happier than he. Galled by his iron collar, he was sometimes tempted to run away when he compared himself with some well-dressed youth he met in the street. Now and then an impulse of folly with regard to women would surge up in him; and his resignation was only a part of his disgust of life. Kept steady by Godeschall's example, he was dragged rather than led by his will to follow so thorny a path.

Godeschal, who watched Oscar, made it his rule not to put his ward in the way of temptation. The boy had usually no

money, or so little that he could not run into excesses. During the last year the worthy Godeschall had five or six time taken Oscar out for some "lark," paying the cost, for he perceived that the cord round this tethered kid's neck must be loosened; and these excesses, as the austere head-clerk termed them, helped Oscar to endure life. He found little to amuse him at his uncle's house, and still less at his mother's, for she lived even more frugally than Desroches.

Moreau could not, like Godeschal, make himself familiar with Oscar, and it is probable that this true protector made Godeschal his deputy in initiating the poor boy into the many mysteries of life. Oscar, thus learning discretion, could at last appreciate the enormity of the blunder he had committed during his ill-starred journey in the *coucou;* still, as the greater part of his fancies were so far suppressed, the follies of youth might yet lead him astray. However, as by degrees he acquired knowledge of the world and its ways, his reason developed; and so long as Godeschal did not lose sight of him, Moreau hoped to train Madame Clapart's son to a good end.

"How is he going on?" the estate agent asked on his return from a journey which had kept him away from Paris for some months.

"Still much too vain," replied Godeschal. "You give him good clothes and fine linen, he wears shirt-frills like a stock-broker, and my gentleman goes walking in the Tuileries on Sundays in search of adventures. What can I say? He is young.—He teases me to introduce him to my sister, in whose house he would meet a famous crew!—actresses, dancers, dandies, men who are eating themselves out of house and home.—He is not cut out for an attorney, I fear. Still, he does not speak badly; he might become a pleader. He could argue a case from a well-prepared brief."

In November 1825, when Oscar Husson was made second clerk, and was preparing his *thesis* for taking out his license, a new fourth clerk came to Desroches' office to fill up the gap made by Oscar's promotion.

This fourth clerk, whose name was Frédéric Marest, was

intended for the higher walks of the law, and was now ending his third year at the schools. From information received by the inquiring minds of the office, he was a handsome fellow of three-and-twenty, who had inherited about twelve thousand francs a year at the death of a bachelor uncle, and the son of a Madame Marest, the widow of a rich timber merchant. The future judge, filled with the laudable desire to know his business in its minutest details, placed himself under Desroches, intending to study procedure, so as to be fit to take the place of a managing clerk in two years' time. His purpose was to go through his first stages as a pleader in Paris, so as to be fully prepared for an appointment, which, as a young man of wealth, he would certainly get. To see himself a public prosecutor, at the age of thirty, was the height of his ambition.

Though Frédéric Marest was the first cousin of Georges Marest, the practical joker of the journey to Presles, as young Husson knew this youth only by his first name, as Georges, the name of Frédéric Marest had no suggestions for him.

"Gentlemen," said Godeschal at breakfast, addressing all his underlings, "I have to announce the advent of a new student in law; and as he is very rich, we shall, I hope, make him pay his footing handsomely."

"Bring out the Book," cried Oscar to the youngest clerk, "and let us be serious, pray."

The boy clambered like a squirrel along the pigeon-holes to reach a volume lying on the top shelf, so as to collect all the dust.

"It is finely colored!" said the lad, holding it up.

We must now explain the perennial pleasantry which at that time gave rise to the existence of such a book in almost every lawyer's office. An old saying of the eighteenth century —"Clerks only breakfast, farmers generally dine, and lords sup"—is still true, as regards the faculty of law, of every man who has spent two or three years studying procedure under an attorney, or the technicalities of a notary's business under some master of that branch. In the life of a lawyer's

clerk work is so unremitting, that pleasure is enjoyed all the more keenly for its rarity, and a practical joke especially is relished with rapture. This, indeed, is what explains up to a certain point Georges Marest's behavior in Pierrotin's chaise. The gloomiest of law-clerks is always a prey to the craving for farcical buffoonery. The instinct with which a practical joke or an occasion for fooling is jumped at and utilized among law-clerks is marvelous to behold, and is found in no other class but among artists. The studio and the lawyer's office are, in this respect, better than the stage.

Desroches, having started in an office without a connection, had, as it were, founded a new dynasty. This "Restoration" had interrupted the traditions of the office with regard to the footing of the newcomer. Desroches, indeed, settling in quarters where stamped paper had never yet been seen, had put in new tables, and clean new file-boxes of white mill-board edged with blue. His staff consisted of clerks who had come from other offices with no connection between them, and thrown together by surprise as it were.

But Godeschal, who had learned his fence under Derville, was not the man to allow the precious tradition of the *Bienvenue* to be lost. The *Bienvenue,* or welcome, is the breakfast which every new pupil must give to the "old boys" of the office to which he is articled. Now, just at the time when Oscar joined the office, in the first six months of Desroches' career, one winter afternoon when work was got through earlier than usual, and the clerks were warming themselves before going home, Godeschal hit upon the notion of concocting a sham register of the *fasti* and High Festivals of the Minions of the Law, a relic of great antiquity, saved from the storms of the Revolution, and handed down from the office of the great Bordin, Attorney to the Châtelet, and the immediate predecessor of Sauvagnest, the attorney from whom Desroches had taken the office. The first thing was to find in some stationer's old stock a ledger with paper bearing an eighteenth century watermark, and properly bound in parchment, in which to enter the decrees of the Council. Having discovered such a volume, it was tossed in the dust, in the ash-pan, in the

fireplace, in the kitchen; it was even left in what the clerks called the consulting-room; and it had acquired a tint of mildew that would have enchanted a book-worm, the cracks of primeval antiquity, and corners so worn that the mice might have nibbled them off. The edges were rubbed with infinite skill. The book being thus perfected, here are a few passages which will explain to the dullest the uses to which Desroches' clerks devoted it, the first sixty pages being filled with sham reports of cases.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. So be it.

"Whereas, on this day the Festival of our Lady Saint Geneviève, patron saint of this good city of Paris, under whose protection the scribes and scriveners of this office have dwelt since the year of our Lord 1525, we, the undersigned clerks and scriveners of this office of Master Jerosme-Sebastien Bordin, successor here to the deceased Guerbet, who in his lifetime served as attorney to the Châtelet, have recognized the need for us to replace the register and archives of installations of clerks in this glorious office, being ourselves distinguished members of the Faculty of the Law, which former register is now filled with the roll and record of our well-beloved predecessors, and we have besought the keeper of the Palace archives to bestow it with those of other offices, and we have all attended High Mass in the parish church of Saint-Séverin to solemnize the opening of this our new register.

"In token whereof, we here sign and affix our names.

"MALIN, Head-Clerk.
"GREVIN, Second Clerk.
"ATHANASE FERET, Clerk.
"JACQUES HUET, Clerk.
"REGINALD DE SAINT-JEAN-D'ANGELY, Clerk.
"BEDEAU, Office Boy and Gutter-Jumper.

"In the year of our Lord 1787.

"Having attended Mass, we went in a body to la Courtille,

and had a great breakfast, which lasted until seven in the morning."

This was a miracle of caligraphy. An expert could have sworn that the writing dated from the eighteenth century. Then follow twenty-seven reports in full of "Welcome" breakfasts, the last dating from the fatal year 1792.

After a gap of fourteen years, the register re-opened in 1806 with the appointment of Bordin to be attorney to the lower Court of the Seine. And this was the record of the re-constitution of the Kingdom of Basoche (the legal profession generally) :—

"God in His clemency has granted that in the midst of the storms which have devastated France, now a great Empire, the precious archives of the most illustrious office of Master Bordin should be preserved. And we, the undersigned clerks of the most honorable and most worshipful Master Bordin, do not hesitate to ascribe this their marvelous escape, when so many other title-deeds, charters, and letters patent have vanished, to the protection of Saint Geneviève, the patron saint of this office, as likewise to the reverence paid by the last of the attorneys of the old block to all ancient use and custom. And whereas we know not what share to ascribe to the Lady Saint Geneviève and what to Master Bordin in the working of this miracle, we have resolved to go to the Church of Saint Étienne-du-Mont, there to attend a mass to be said at the altar of that saintly shepherdess who sendeth us so many lambs to fleece, and to invite our chief and master to breakfast, in the hope that he may bear the charge thereof. And to this we set our hand.

"Oignard, Head-Clerk.
"Poidevin, Second Clerk.
"Proust, Clerk.
"Brignolet, Clerk.
"Derville, Clerk.
"Augusten Coret, Office Boy.

"At the office, this 10th day of November 1806."

"At three o'clock of the afternoon of the next day, the undersigned, being the clerks of this office, record their gratitude to their very worshipful chief, who hath feasted them at the shop of one Rolland, a cook in the Rue du Hasard, on good wines of three districts, Bordeaux, Champagne, and Burgundy and on meats of good savor, from four o'clock of the afternoon until half-past seven, with coffee, liqueurs, and ices galore. Yet hath the presence of the worshipful master hindered us from the singing of *laudes* in clerkly modes, nor hath any clerk overstepped the limits of pleasing levity, inasmuch as our worthy, worshipful, and generous master had promised to take up his clerks to see Talma in *Britannicus* at the Théâtre Français. Long may he flourish! May heaven shed blessings on our worshipful master! May he get a good price for this his glorious office! May rich clients come to his heart's desire! May his bills of cost be paid in gold on the nail! May all our future masters be like him! May he be ever beloved of his clerks, even when he is no more!"

Next came thirty-three reports in due form of the receptions of clerks who had joined the office, distinguished by various handwritings in different shades of ink, distinct phraseology, and different signatures, and containing such laudatory accounts of the good cheer and wines as seemed to prove that the reports were drawn up on the spot and *inter pocula*.

Finally, in the month of June, 1822, at the time when Desrosches himself had taken the oaths, there was this page of business-like prose:—

"I, the undersigned François Claude Marie Godeschal, being called by Maître Desroches to fulfil the difficult duties of head-clerk in an office where there are as yet no clients, having heard from Maître Derville, whose chambers I have quitted, of the existence of certain famous archives of Basochian banquets and Festivals famous in the Courts, I besought our worshipful master to require them of his predecessor; for it was important to recover that document,

which bore the date A. D. 1786, and was the sequel to the archives, deposited with those of the Courts of Law, of which the existence was certified by MM. Terrasse and Duclos, keepers of the said archives, going back to the year 1525, and giving historical details of the highest value as to the manners and cookery of the law-clerks in those days.

"This having been granted, the office was put in possession as at this time of these evidences of the worship constantly paid by our predecessors to the *Dive Bouteille* and to good cheer.

"Whereupon, for the edification of those that come after us, and to continue the sequence of time and cup, I have invited MM. Doublet, second clerk; Vassal, third clerk; Hérisson and Grandemain, assistant clerks; Dumets, office boy, to breakfast on Sunday next at the *Cheval Rouge* on the Quai Saint-Bernard, where we will celebrate the recovery of this volume containing the charter of our guzzlings.

"On this day, Sunday, June 27th, one dozen bottles of various wines were drunk and found excellent. Noteworthy, likewise, were two melons, pies *au jus romanum*, a fillet of beef, and a toast *Agaricibus*. Mademoiselle Mariette, the illustrious sister of the head-clerk, and leading lady at the Royal Academy of Music and Dancing, having given to the clerks of this office stalls for that evening's performance, she is hereby to be remembered for her act of generosity. And it is furthermore resolved that the said clerks shall proceed in a body to return thanks to that noble damsel, and to assure her that on the occasion of her first lawsuit, if the Devil involves her in one, she shall pay no more than the bare costs; to which all set their hand.

"Godeschal was proclaimed the pride of his profession, and the best of good fellows. May the man who treats others so handsomely soon be treating for a business of his own!"

The document was spattered with wine-spots and with blots and flourishes like fireworks.

To give a complete idea of the stamp of truth impressed on

this great work, it will suffice to extract the report of the reception supposed to have been provided by Oscar:—

"To-day, Monday, the 25th day of November 1822, after a meeting held yesterday in the Rue de la Cerisaie, hard by the Arsenal, at the house of Madame Clapart, the mother of the new pupil, by name Oscar Husson, we, the undersigned, declare that the breakfast far surpassed our expectations. It included radishes (red and black), gherkins, anchovies, butter, and olives as introductory *hors-d' œuvres;* of a noble rich broth that bore witness to a mother's care, inasmuch as we recognized in it a delicious flavor of fowl; and by the courtesy of the founder of the feast we were, in fact, informed that the trimmings of a handsome cold dish prepared by Madame Clapart had been judiciously added to the stock concocted at home with such care as is known only in private kitchens.

"*Item,* the aforementioned cold fowl, surrounded by a sea of jelly, the work of the aforenamed mother.

"*Item,* an ox-tongue, *aux tomates,* on which we proved ourselves by no means au-tomata.

"*Item,* a stew of pigeons of such flavor as led us to believe that angels had watched over the pot.

"*Item,* a dish of macaroni flanked by cups of chocolate custard.

"*Item,* dessert, consisting of eleven dishes, among which, in spite of the intoxication resulting from sixteen bottles of excellent wine, we discerned the flavor of an exquisitely and superlatively delicious preserve of peaches.

"The wines of Roussillon and of the Côte du Rhône quite outdid those of Champagne and Burgundy. A bottle of Maraschino, and one of Kirsch, finally, and in spite of delicious coffee, brought us to such a pitch of œnological rapture, that one of us—namely, Master Hérisson—found himself in the Bois de Boulogne when he believed he was still on the Boulevard du Temple; and that Jacquinaut, the gutter-jumper, aged fourteen, spoke to citizens' wives of fifty-seven,

taking them for women on the street; to which all set their hand.

"Now, in the statutes of our Order there is a law strictly observed, which is, that those who aspire to the benefits and honors of the profession of the law shall restrict the magnificence of their 'welcome' to the due proportion with their fortune, inasmuch as it is a matter of public notoriety that no man with a private income serves Themis, and that all clerks are kept short of cash by their fond parents; wherefore, it is with great admiration that we here record the munificence of Madame Clapart, widow after her first marriage of Monsieur Husson, the new licentiate's father, and declare that it was worthy of the cheers we gave her at the dessert; to which all set their hand."

This rigmarole had already taken in three newcomers, and three real breakfasts were duly recorded in this imposing volume.

On the day when a neophyte first made his appearance in the office, the boy always laid the archives on the desk in front of his seat, and the clerks chuckled as they watched the face of the new student while he read these grotesque passages. Each in turn, *inter pocula,* had been initiated into the secret of this practical joke, and the revelation, as may be supposed, filled them with the hope of mystifying other clerks in the future.

So, now, my readers can imagine the countenances of the four clerks and the boy, when Oscar, now in his turn the practical joker, uttered the words, "Bring out the Book."

Ten minutes later, a handsome young man came in, well grown and pleasant looking, asked for Monsieur Desroches, and gave his name at once to Godeschal.

"I am Frédéric Marest," said he, "and have come to fill the place of third clerk here."

"Monsieur Husson," said Godeschal, "show the gentleman his seat, and induct him into our ways of work."

Next morning the new clerk found the Book lying on his writing-pad; but after reading the first pages, he only laughed, gave no invitation, and put the book aside on his desk.

"Gentlemen," said he, as he was leaving at five o'clock, "I have a cousin who is managing-clerk to Maître Léopold Hannequin, the notary, and I will consult him as to what I should do to pay my footing."

"This looks badly," cried Godeschal. "Our sucking magistrate is no greenhorn."

"Oh! we will lead him a life!" said Oscar.

Next afternoon, at about two o'clock, Oscar saw a visitor come in, and recognized in Hannequin's head-clerk Georges Marest.

"Why, here is Ali Pasha's friend!" said he, in an airy tone.

"What? you here, my lord, the Ambassador?" retorted Georges, remembering Oscar.

"Oh, ho! then you are old acquaintances?" said Godeschal to Georges.

"I believe you! We played the fool in company," said Georges, "above two years ago.—Yes, I left Crottat to go to Hannequin in consequence of that very affair."

"What affair?" asked Godeschal.

"Oh, a mere nothing," replied Georges, with a wink at Oscar. "We tried to make game of a Peer of France, and it was he who made us look foolish.—And now, I hear you want to draw my cousin."

"We do not draw anything," said Oscar with dignity. "Here is our charter." And he held out the famous volume at a page where sentence of excommunication was recorded against a refractory student, who had been fairly driven out of the office for stinginess in 1788.

"Still, I seem to smell game," said Georges, "for here is the trail," and he pointed to the farcical archives. "However, my cousin and I can afford it, and we will give you a feast such as you never had, and which will stimulate your imagination when recording it here.—To-morrow, Sunday, at the *Rocher de Cancale,* two o'clock. And I will take you after-

wards to spend the evening with Madame la Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos, where we will gamble, and you will meet the élite of fashion. And so, gentlemen of the lower Court," he went on, with the arrogance of a notary, "let us have your best behavior, and carry your wine like gentlemen of the Regency."

"Hurrah!" cried the clerks like one man. "Bravo!—*Very well!*—*Vivat!*—Long live the Marests!——"

"Pontins," added the boy (Les Marais Pontins—the Pontine Marshes).

"What is up?" asked Desroches, coming out of his private room. "Ah! you are here, Georges," said he to the visitor. "I know you, you are leading my clerks into mischief." And he went back into his own room, calling Oscar.

"Here," said he, opening his cash-box, "are five hundred francs; go to the Palace of Justice and get the judgment in the case of Vandenesse *vs.* Vandenesse out of the copying-clerk's office; it must be sent in this evening if possible. I promised Simon a refresher of twenty francs; wait for the copy if it is not ready, and do not let yourself be put off. Derville is quite capable of putting a drag on our wheels if it will serve his client.—Count Félix de Vandenesse is more influential than his brother the Ambassador, our client. So keep your eyes open, and if the least difficulty arises, come to me at once."

Oscar set out, determined to distinguish himself in this little skirmish, the first job that had come to him since his promotion.

When Georges and Oscar were both gone, Godeschal tried to pump the new clerk as to what jest might lie, as he felt sure, under the name of the Marquise de las Florentines y Cabirolos; but Frédéric carried on his cousin's joke with the coolness and gravity of a judge, and by his replies and his manner contrived to convey to all the clerks that the Marquise de las Florentinas was the widow of a Spanish grandee, whom his cousin was courting. Born in Mexico, and the daughter of a Creole, this wealthy young widow was remark-

able for the free-and-easy demeanor characteristic of the women of the Tropics.

" 'She likes to laugh, She likes to drink, She likes to sing as we do,' " said he, quoting a famous song by Béranger. "And Georges," he went on, "is very rich; he inherited a fortune from his father, who was a widower, and who left him eighteen thousand francs a year, which, with twelve thousand left to each of us by an uncle, make an income of thirty thousand francs. And he hopes to be Marquis de las Florentinas, for the young widow bears her title in her own right, and can confer it on her husband."

Though the clerks remained very doubtful as to the Marquise, the prospect of a breakfast at the *Rocher de Cancale,* and of a fashionable soirée, filled them with joy. They reserved their opinion as to the Spanish lady, to judge her without appeal after having seen her.

The Marquise de las Florentinas was, in fact, neither more nor less than Mademoiselle Agathe Florentine Cabirolle, leading *danseuse* at the Gaîté Theatre, at whose house Uncle Cardot "sang *La Mère Godichon.*" Within a year of the very reparable loss of the late Madame Cardot, the fortunate merchant met Florentine one evening coming out of Coulon's dancing school. Dazzled by the beauty of this flower of the ballet—Florentine was then but thirteen—the retired shopkeeper followed her to the Rue Pastourelle, where he had the satisfaction of learning that the future divinity of the dance owed her existence to a humble doorkeeper. The mother and daughter, transplanted within a fortnight to the Rue de Crussol, there found themselves in modest but easy circumstances. So it was to this "Patron of the Arts," to use a time-honored phrase, that the stage was indebted for the budding artist.

The generous Mæcenas almost turned their simple brains by giving them mahogany furniture, curtains, carpets, and a well-fitted kitchen; he enabled them to keep a servant, and allowed them two hundred and fifty francs a month. Old Cardot, with his *ailes de pigeon,* to them seemed an angel,

and was treated as a benefactor should be. This was the golden age of the old man's passion.

For three years the singer of *La Mère Godichon* was so judicious as to keep Mademoiselle Cabirolle and her mother in this unpretentious house, close to the theatre; then, for love of the Terpsichorean art, he placed his protégée under Vestris. And, in 1820, he was so happy as to see Florentine dance her first steps in the ballet of a spectacular melodrama called "The Ruins of Babylon." Florentine was now sixteen.

Soon after this first appearance Uncle Cardot was "an old hunks," in the young lady's estimation; however, as he had tact enough to understand that a dancer at the Gaîté Theatre must keep up a position, and raised her monthly allowance to five hundred francs a month, if he was no longer an angel, he was at least a friend for life, a second father. This was the age of silver.

Between 1820 and 1823 Florentine went through the experience which must come to every ballet-dancer of nineteen or twenty. Her friends were the famous opera-singers Mariette and Tullia; Florine, and poor Coralie, so early snatched from Art, Love, and Camusot. And as little uncle Cardot himself was now five years older, he had drifted into the indulgence of that half-fatherly affection which old men feel for the young talents they have trained, and whose successes are theirs. Besides, how and where should a man of sixty-eight have formed such another attachment as this with Florentine, who knew his ways, and at whose house he could sing *La Mère Godichon* with his friends? So the little man found himself under a half matrimonial yoke of irresistible weight. This was the age of brass.

In the course of the five years of the ages of gold and of silver, Cardot had saved ninety thousand francs. The old man had had much experience; he foresaw that by the time he was seventy Florentine would be of age; she would probably come out on the Opera stage, and, of course, expect the luxury and splendor of a leading lady. Only a few days before the evening now to be described, Cardot had spent

forty-five thousand francs in establishing his Florentine in a suitable style, and had taken for her the apartment where the now dead Coralie had been the joy of Camusot. In Paris, apartments and houses, like streets, have a destiny.

Glorying in magnificent plate, the leading lady of the Gaîté gave handsome dinners, spent three hundred francs a month on dress, never went out but in a private fly, and kept a maid, a cook, and a page. What she aimed at indeed was a command to dance at the opera. The *Cocon d'Or* laid its handsomest products at the feet of its former master to please Mademoiselle Cabirolle, known as Florentine, just as, three years since, it had gratified every wish of Coralie's; but still without the knowledge of uncle Cardot's daughter, for the father and his son-in-law had always agreed that decorum must be respected at home. Madame Camusot knew nothing of her husband's extravagance or her father's habits.

Now, after being the master for seven years, Cardot felt himself in tow of a pilot whose power of caprice was unlimited. But the unhappy old fellow was in love. Florentine alone must close his eyes, and he meant to leave her a hundred thousand francs. The age of iron had begun.

Georges Marest, handsome, young, and rich, with thirty thousand francs a year, was paying court to Florentine. Every dancer is by way of loving somebody as her protector loves her, and having a young man to escort her out walking or driving, and arrange excursions into the country. And, however disinterested, the affections of a leading lady are always a luxury, costing the happy object of her choice some little trifle. Dinners at the best restaurants, boxes at the play, carriages for driving in the environs of Paris, and choice wines lavishly consumed—for ballet-dancers live now like the athletes of antiquity.

Georges, in short, amused himself as young men do who suddenly find themselves independent of paternal discipline; and his uncle's death, almost doubling his income, enlarged his ideas. So long as he had but the eighteen thousand francs a year left him by his parents he intended to be a notary; but,

as his cousin remarked to Desroches' clerks, a man would be a noodle to start in a profession with as much money as others have when they give it up. So the retiring law-clerk was celebrating his first day of freedom by this breakfast, which was also to pay his cousin's footing.

Frédéric, more prudent than Georges, persisted in his legal career.

As a fine young fellow like Georges might very well marry a rich creole, and the Marquis de las Florentinas y Cabirolos might very well in the decline of life—as Frédéric hinted to his new companions—have preferred to marry for beauty rather than for noble birth, the clerks of Desroches' office—all belonging to impecunious families, and having no acquaintance with the fashionable world—got themselves up in their Sunday clothes, all impatience to see the Mexican Marquesa de las Florentinas y Cabirolos.

"What good luck," said Oscar to Godeschal as he dressed in the morning, "that I should have just ordered a new coat, waistcoat, and trousers, and a pair of boots, and that my precious mother should have given me a new outfit on my promotion to be second clerk. I have six fine shirts with frills out of the dozen she gave me. We will make a good show? Oh! if only one of us could carry off the Marquise from that Georges Marest!"

"A pretty thing for a clerk in Maître Desroches' office!" cried Godeschal. "Will you never be cured of your vanity—brat!"

"Oh, monsieur," said Madame Clapart, who had just come in to bring her son some ties, and heard the managing clerk's remarks, "would to God that Oscar would follow your good advice! It is what I am always saying to him, 'Imitate Monsieur Godeschal, take his advice,' is what I say."

"He is getting on, madame," said Godeschal, "but he must not often be so clumsy as he was yesterday, or he will lose his place in the master's good graces. Maître Desroches cannot stand a man who is beaten. He sent your son on his first errand yesterday, to fetch away the copy of the judgment deliv-

ered in a will case, which two brothers, men of high rank, are fighting against each other, and Oscar allowed himself to be circumvented. The master was furious. It was all I could do to set things straight by going at six this morning to find the copying-clerk, and I made him promise to let me have the judgment in black and white by seven to-morrow morning."

"Oh, Godeschal," cried Oscar, going up to his superior and grasping his hand, "you are a true friend!"

"Yes, monsieur," said Madame Clapart, "it is a happy thing for a mother to feel that her son has such a friend as you, and you may believe that my gratitude will end only with my life. Oscar, beware of this Georges Marest; he has already been the cause of your first misfortune in life."

"How was that?" asked Godeschal.

The too-confiding mother briefly told the head-clerk the story of poor Oscar's adventure in Pierrotin's chaise.

"And I am certain," added Godeschal, "that the humbug has planned some trick on us this evening. I shall not go to the Marquis de las Florentinas. My sister needs my help in drawing up a fresh engagement, so I shall leave you at dessert. But be on your guard, Oscar. Perhaps they will make you gamble, and Desroches' office must not make a poor mouth. Here, you can stake for us both; here are a hundred francs," said the kind fellow, giving the money to Oscar, whose purse had been drained by the tailor and bootmaker. "Be careful; do not dream of playing beyond the hundred francs; do not let play or wine go to your head. By the Mass! even a second clerk has a position to respect; he must not play on promissory paper, nor overstep a due limit in anything. When a man is second clerk he must remember that he will presently be an attorney. So not to drink, not to play high, and to be moderate in all things, must be your rule of conduct. Above all, be in by midnight, for you must be at the Courts by seven to fetch away the copy of that judgment. There is no law against some fun, but business holds the first place."

"Do you hear, Oscar?" said Madame Clapart. "And see

how indulgent Monsieur Godeschal is, and how he combines the enjoyments of youth with the demands of duty."

Madame Clapart, seeing the tailor and bootmaker waiting for Oscar, remained behind a moment with Godeschal to return the hundred francs he had just lent the boy.

"A mother's blessing be on you, monsieur, and on all you do," said she.

The mother had the supreme delight of seeing her boy well dressed; she had bought him a gold watch, purchased out of her savings, as a reward for his good conduct.

"You are on the list for the conscription next week," said she, "and as it was necessary to be prepared in case your number should be drawn, I went to see your uncle Cardot; he is delighted at your being so high up at the age of twenty, and at your success in the examinations at the law schools, so he has promised to find the money for a substitute. Do you not yourself feel some satisfaction in finding good conduct so well rewarded? If you still have to put up with some privations, think of the joy of being able to purchase a connection in only five years! And remember too, dear boy, how happy you make your mother."

Oscar's face, thinned down a little by hard study, had developed into a countenance to which habits of business had given a look of gravity. He had done growing, and had a beard; in short, from a boy he had become a man. His mother could not but admire him, and she kissed him fondly, saying:

"Yes, enjoy yourself, but remember Monsieur Godeschal's advice.—By the way, I was forgetting: here is a present from our friend Moreau—a pocketbook."

"The very thing I want, for the chief gave me five hundred francs to pay for that confounded judgment in Vandenesse, and I did not want to leave them in my room."

"Are you carrying the money about with you?" said his mother in alarm. "Supposing you were to lose such a sum of money! Would you not do better to leave it with Monsieur Godeschal?"

"Godeschal!" cried Oscar, thinking his mother's idea admirable.

But Godeschal, like all clerks on Sunday, had his day to himself from ten o'clock, and was already gone.

When his mother had left, Oscar went out to lounge on the Boulevards till it was time for the breakfast. How could he help airing those resplendent clothes, that he wore with such pride, and the satisfaction that every man will understand who began life in narrow circumstances. A neat double-breasted blue cashmere waistcoat, black kerseymere trousers made with pleats, a well-fitting black coat, and a cane with a silver-gilt knob, bought out of his little savings, were the occasion of very natural pleasure to the poor boy, who remembered the clothes he had worn on the occasion of that journey to Presles, and the effect produced on his mind by Georges.

Oscar looked forward to a day of perfect bliss; he was to see the world of fashion for the first time that evening! And it must be admitted that to a lawyer's clerk starved of pleasure, who had for long been craving for a debauch, the sudden play of the senses was enough to obliterate the wise counsels of Godeschal and his mother. To the shame of the young be it said, good advice and warnings are never to seek. Apart from the morning's lecture, Oscar felt an instinctive dislike of Georges; he was humiliated in the presence of a man who had witnessed the scene in the drawing-room at Presles, when Moreau had dragged him to the Count's feet.

The moral sphere has its laws; and we are always punished if we ignore them. One, especially, the very beasts obey invariably and without delay. It is that which bids us fly from any one who has once injured us, voluntarily or involuntarily, intentionally or no. The being who has brought woe or discomfort on us is always odious. Whatever his rank, however near be the ties of affection, we must part. He is the emissary of our evil genius. Though Christian theory is opposed to such conduct, obedience to this inexorable law is essentially social and preservative. James II.'s daughter, who sat on her father's throne, must have inflicted more than one wound on him before her usurpation. Judas must certainly have given

Jesus some mortal thrust or ever he betrayed Him. There is within us a second sight, a mind's eye, which foresees disasters; and the repugnance we feel to the fateful being is the consequence of this prophetic sense. Though religion may command us to resist it, distrust remains and its voice should be listened to.

Could Oscar, at the age of twenty, be so prudent? Alas! When, at two o'clock, Oscar went into the room of the *Rocher de Cancale,* where he found three guests besides his fellow-clerks—to wit, an old dragoon captain named Giroudeau; Finot, a journalist who might enable Florentine to get an engagement at the opera; and du Bruel, an author and friend of Tullia's, one of Mariette's rivals at the opera,—the junior felt his hostility melt away under the first hand-shaking, the first flow of talk among young men, as they sat at a table handsomely laid for twelve. And indeed Georges was charming to Oscar.

"You are," said he, "following a diplomatic career, but in private concerns; for what is the difference between an ambassador and an attorney? Merely that which divides a nation from an individual. Ambassadors are the attorneys of a people.—If I can ever be of any use to you, depend on me."

"My word! I may tell you now," said Oscar, "you were the cause of a terrible catastrophe for me."

"Pooh!" said Georges, after listening to the history of the lad's tribulations. "It was Monsieur de Sérizy who behaved badly. His wife?—I would not have her at a gift. And although the Count is Minister of State and Peer of France, I would not be in his red skin! He is a small-minded man, and I can afford to despise him now."

Oscar listened with pleasure to Georges' ironies on the Comte de Sérizy, for they seemed to diminish the gravity of his own fault, and he threw himself into the young man's spirit as he predicted that overthrow of the nobility of which the citizen class then had visions, to be realized in 1830.

They sat down at half-past three; dessert was not on the table before eight. Each course of dishes lasted two hours.

None but law-clerks can eat so steadily! Digestions of eighteen and twenty are inexplicable to the medical faculty. The wine was worthy of Borrel, who had at that time succeeded the illustrious Balaine, the creator of the very best restaurant in Paris—and that is to say in the world—for refined and perfect cookery.

A full report of this Belshazzar's feast was drawn up at dessert, beginning with—*Inter pocula aurea restauranti, qui vulgo dicitur Rupes Cancali:* and from this introduction the rapturous record may be imagined which was added to this Golden Book of the High Festivals of the Law.

Godeschal disappeared after signing his name, leaving the eleven feasters, prompted by the old captain of the Imperial Dragoons, to devote themselves to the wine, the liqueurs, and the toasts, over a dessert of pyramids of sweets and fruits like the pyramids of Thebes. By half-past ten the "boy" of the office was in a state which necessitated his removal; Georges packed him into a cab, gave the driver his mother's address, and paid his fare. Then the ten remaining guests, as drunk as Pitt and Dundas, talked of going on foot by the Boulevards, the night being very fine, as far as the residence of the Marquise, where, at a little before midnight, they would find a brilliant company. The whole party longed to fill their lungs with fresh air; but excepting Georges, Giroudeau, Finot, and du Bruel, all accustomed to Parisian orgies, no one could walk. So Georges sent for three open carriages from a job-master's stables, and took the whole party for an airing on the outer Boulevards for an hour, from Montmartre to the Barrière du Trône, and back by Bercy, the quays, and the Boulevards to the Rue de Vendôme.

The youngsters were still floating in the paradise of fancy to which intoxication transports boys, when their entertainer led them into Florentine's rooms. Here sat a dazzling assembly of the queens of the stage, who, at a hint, no doubt, from Frédéric, amused themselves by aping the manners of fine ladies. Ices were handed round, the chandeliers blazed with wax lights. Tullia's footman, with those of Madame

du Val-Noble and Florine, all in gaudy livery, carried round sweetmeats on silver trays. The hangings, choice products of the looms of Lyons, and looped with gold cord, dazzled the eye. The flowers on the carpet suggested a garden-bed. Costly toys and curiosities glittered on all sides. At first, and in the obfuscated state to which Georges had brought them, the clerks, and Oscar in particular, believed in the genuineness of the Marquesa de las Florentinas y Cabirolos.

On four tables set out for play, gold pieces lay in glittering heaps. In the drawing-room the women were playing at Vingt-et-un, Nathan, the famous author, holding the deal. Thus, after being carried tipsy and half-asleep along the dimly-lighted Boulevards, the clerks woke to find themselves in Armida's Palace. Oscar, on being introduced by Georges to the sham Marquise, stood dumfounded, not recognizing the ballet-dancer from the Gaîté in an elegant dress cut aristocratically low at the neck and richly trimmed with lace—a woman looking like a vignette in a keepsake, who received them with an air and manners that had no parallel in the experience or the imagination of a youth so strictly bred as he had been. After he had admired all the splendor of the rooms, the beautiful women who displayed themselves and who had vied with each other in dress for this occasion—the inauguration of all this magnificence,—Florentine took Oscar by the hand and led him to the table where Vingt-et-un was going on.

"Come, let me introduce you to the handsome Marquise d'Anglade, one of my friends——"

And she took the hapless Oscar up to pretty Fanny Beaupré, who, for the last two years, had filled poor Coralie's place in Camusot's affections. The young actress had just achieved a reputation in the part of a Marquise in a melodrama at the Porte-Sainte-Martin, called *la Famille d'Anglade,* one of the successes of the day.

"Here, my dear," said Florentine, "allow me to introduce to you a charming youth who can be your partner in the game."

"Oh! that will be very nice!" replied the actress, with a fascinating smile, as she looked Oscar down from head to foot. "I am losing. We will go shares, if you like."

"I am at your orders, Madame la Marquise," said Oscar, taking a seat by her side.

"You shall stake," said she, "and I will play. You will bring me luck. There, that is my last hundred francs——" And the sham Marquise took out a purse of which the rings were studded with diamonds, and produced five gold pieces. Oscar brought out his hundred francs in five-franc pieces, already shamefaced at mingling the ignoble silver cart-wheels with the gold coin. In ten rounds the actress had lost the two hundred francs.

"Come! this is stupid!" she exclaimed. "I will take the deal. We will still be partners?" she asked of Oscar.

Fanny Beaupré rose, and the lad, who, like her, was now the centre of attention to the whole table, dared not withdraw, saying that the devil alone was lodged in his purse. He was speechless, his tongue felt heavy and stuck to his palate.

"Lend me five hundred francs," said the actress to the dancer.

Florentine brought her five hundred francs, which she borrowed of Georges, who had just won at écarté eight times running.

"Nathan has won twelve hundred francs," said the actress to the clerk. "The dealer always wins; do not let us be made fools of," she whispered in his ear.

Every man of feeling, of imagination, of spirit will understand that poor Oscar could not help opening his pocketbook and taking out the five hundred franc note. He looked at Nathan, the famous writer, who, in partnership with Florine, staked high against the dealer.

"Now then, boy, sweep it in!" cried Fanny Beaupré, signing to Oscar to take up two hundred francs that Florine and Nathan had lost.

The actress did not spare the losers her banter and jests. She enlivened the game by remarks of a character which Oscar

thought strange; but delight stifled these reflections, for the first two deals brought in winnings of two thousand francs. Oscar longed to be suddenly taken ill and to fly, leaving his partner to her fate, but honor forbade it. Three more deals had carried away the profits. Oscar felt the cold sweat down his spine; he was quite sobered now. The last two rounds absorbed a thousand francs staked by the partners; Oscar felt thirsty, and drank off three glasses of iced punch.

The actress led him into an adjoining room, talking nonsense to divert him; but the sense of his error so completely overwhelmed Oscar, to whom Desroches' face appeared like a vision in a dream, that he sank on to a splendid ottoman in a dark corner and hid his face in his handkerchief. He was fairly crying. Florentine detected him in this attitude, too sincere not to strike an actress; she hurried up to Oscar, pulled away the handkerchief, and seeing his tears led him into a boudoir.

"What is the matter, my boy?" said she.

To this voice, these words, this tone, Oscar, recognizing the motherliness of a courtesan's kindness, replied:

"I have lost five hundred francs that my master gave me to pay to-morrow morning for a judgment; there is nothing for it but to throw myself into the river; I am disgraced."

"How can you be so silly?" cried Florentine. "Stay where you are, I will bring you a thousand francs. Try to recover it all, but only risk five hundred francs, so as to keep your chief's money. Georges plays a first-rate game at écarté; bet on him."

Oscar, in his dreadful position, accepted the offer of the mistress of the house.

"Ah!" thought he, "none but a Marquise would be capable of such an action. Beautiful, noble, and immensely rich! Georges is a lucky dog!"

He received a thousand francs in gold from the hands of Florentine, and went to bet on the man who had played him this trick. The punters were pleased at the arrival of a new man, for they all, with the instinct of gamblers, went over to the side of Giroudeau, the old Imperial officer.

"Gentlemen," said Georges, "you will be punished for your defection, for I am in luck.—Come, Oscar; we will do for them."

But Georges and his backer lost five games running. Having thrown away his thousand francs, Oscar, carried away by the gambling fever, insisted on holding the cards. As a result of the luck that often favors a beginner, he won; but Georges puzzled him with advice; he told him how to discard, and frequently snatched his hand from him, so that the conflict of two wills, two minds, spoiled the run of luck. In short, by three in the morning, after many turns of fortune and unhoped-for recoveries, still drinking punch, Oscar found himself possessed of no more than a hundred francs. He rose from the table, his brain heavy and dizzy, walked a few steps, and dropped on to a sofa in the boudoir, his eyes sealed in leaden slumbers.

"Mariette," said Fanny Beaupré to Godeschal's sister, who had come in at about two in the morning, "will you dine here to-morrow? My Camusot will be here and Père Cardot; we will make them mad."

"How?" cried Florentine. "My old man has not sent me word."

"He will be here this morning to tell you that he proposes to sing *la Mère Godichon,*" replied Fanny Beaupré. "He must give a house-warming too, poor man."

"The devil take him and his orgies!" exclaimed Florentine. "He and his son-in-law are worse than magistrates or managers.—After all, Mariette, you dine well here," she went on. "Cardot orders everything from Chevet. Bring your Duc de Maufrigneuse; we will have fun, and make them dance."

Oscar, who caught the names of Cardot and Camusot, made an effort to rouse himself; but he could only mutter a word or two which were not heard, and fell back on the silk cushion.

"You are provided, I see," said Fanny Beaupré to Florentine, with a laugh.

"Ah! poor boy, he is drunk with punch and despair. He

has lost some money his master had intrusted to him for some office business. He was going to kill himself, so I lent him a thousand francs, of which those robbers Finot and Giroudeau have fleeced him. Poor innocent!"

"But we must wake him," said Mariette. "My brother will stand no nonsense, nor his master either."

"Well, wake him if you can, and get him away," said Florentine, going back into the drawing-room to take leave of those who were not gone.

The party then took to dancing—character dances, as they were called; and at daybreak Florentine went to bed very tired, having forgotten Oscar, whom nobody, in fact, remembered, and who was still sleeping soundly.

At about eleven o'clock a terrible sound awoke the lad, who recognized his uncle Cardot's voice, and thought he might get out of the scrape by pretending still to be asleep, so he hid his face in the handsome yellow velvet cushions in which he had passed the night.

"Really, my little Florentine," the old man was saying, "it is neither good nor nice of you. You were dancing last night in the *Ruines,* and then spent the night in an orgy. Why, it is simply destruction to your freshness, not to say that it is really ungrateful of you to inaugurate this splendid apartment without me, with strangers, without my knowing it—who knows what may have happened!"

"You old monster!" cried Florentine. "Have you not a key to come in whenever you like? We danced till half-past five, and you are so cruel as to wake me at eleven."

"Half-past eleven, Titine," said the old man humbly. "I got up early to order a dinner from Chevet worthy of an Archbishop.—How they have spoilt the carpets! Whom had you here?"

"You ought to make no complaints, for Fanny Beaupré told me that you and Camusot were coming, so I have asked the others to met you—Tullia, du Bruel, Mariette, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, Florine, and Nathan. And you will have the

five loveliest women who ever stood behind the footlights, and we will dance you a *pas de Zéphire*."

"It is killing work to lead such a life!" cried old Cardot. "What a heap of broken glasses, what destruction! The anteroom is a scene of horror!"

At this moment the amiable old man stood speechless and fascinated, like a bird under the gaze of a reptile. He caught sight of the outline of a young figure clothed in black cloth.

"Heyday! Mademoiselle Cabirolle!" said he at last.

"Well, what now?" said she.

The girl's eyes followed the direction of Père Cardot's gaze, and when she saw the youth still there, she burst into a fit of crazy laughter, which not only struck the old man dumb, but compelled Oscar to look round. Florentine pulled him up by the arm, and half choked with laughing as she saw the hang-dog look of the uncle and nephew.

"You here, nephew?"

"Oh ho! He is your nephew?" cried Florentine, laughing more than ever. "You never mentioned this nephew of yours. —Then Mariette did not take you home?" said she to Oscar, who sat petrified. "What is to become of the poor boy?"

"Whatever he pleases!" replied old Cardot drily, and turning to the door to go away.

"One minute, Papa Cardot; you will have to help your nephew out of the mess he has got into by my fault, for he has gambled away his master's money, five hundred francs, besides a thousand francs of mine which I lent him to get it back again."

"Wretched boy, have you lost fifteen hundred francs at play —at your age?"

"Oh! uncle, uncle!" cried the unhappy Oscar, cast by these words into the depths of horror at his position. He fell on his knees at his uncle's feet with clasped hands. "It is twelve o'clock; I am lost, disgraced. Monsieur Desroches will show no mercy—there was an important business, a matter on which he prides himself—I was to have gone this morning to fetch away the copy of the judgment in Vandenesse *vs.* Vandenesse!

What has happened?—What has become of me?—Save me for my father's sake—for my aunt's.—Come with me to Maître Desroches and explain; find some excuse——"

The words came out in gasps, between sobs and tears that might have softened the Sphinx in the desert of Luxor.

"Now, old skinflint," cried the dancer in tears, "can you leave your own nephew to disgrace, the son of the man to whom you owe your fortune, since he is Oscar Husson? Save him, I say, or Titine refuses to own you as her milord!"

"But how came he here?" asked the old man.

"What! so as to forget the hour when he should have gone the errand he speaks of? Don't you see, he got drunk and dropped there, dead-tired and sleepy? Georges and his cousin Frédéric treated Desroches' clerks yesterday at the *Rocher de Cancale*."

Cardot looked at her, still doubtful.

"Come, now, old baboon, if it were anything more should I not have hidden him more effectually?" cried she.

"Here, then, take the five hundred francs, you scamp!" said Cardot to his nephew. "That is all you will ever have of me. Go and make matters up with your master if you can.—I will repay the thousand francs mademoiselle lent you, but never let me hear your name again."

Oscar fled, not wishing to hear more; but when he was in the street he did not know where to go.

The chance which ruins men, and the chance that serves them, seemed to be playing against each other on equal terms for Oscar that dreadful morning; but he was destined to fail with a master who, when he made up his mind, never changed it.

Mariette, on returning home, horrified at what might befall her brother's charge, wrote a line to Godeschal, enclosing a five-hundred-franc note, and telling her brother of Oscar's drunken bout and disasters. The good woman, ere she went to sleep, instructed her maid to take this letter to Desroches' chambers before seven. Godeschal, on his part, waking at six,

found no Oscar. He at once guessed what had happened. He took five hundred francs out of his savings and hurried off to the copying-clerk to fetch the judgment, so as to lay it before Desroches for signature in his office at eight. Desroches, who always rose at four, came to his room at seven o'clock. Mariette's maid, not finding her mistress' brother in his attic, went down to the office and was there met by Desroches, to whom she very naturally gave the note.

"Is it a matter of business?" asked the lawyer. "I am Maître Desroches."

"You can see, monsieur," said the woman.

Desroches opened the letter and read it. On finding the five-hundred-franc note he went back into his own room, furious with his second clerk. Then at half-past seven he heard Godeschal dictating a report on the judgment to another clerk, and a few minutes làter Godeschal came into the room in triumph.

"Was it Oscar Husson who went to Simon this morning?" asked Desroches.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Godeschal.

"Who gave him the money?" said the lawyer.

"You," said Godeschal, "on Saturday."

"It rains five-hundred-franc notes, it would seem!" cried Desroches. "Look here, Godeschal, you are a good fellow, but that little wretch Husson does not deserve your generosity. I hate a fool, but yet more I hate people who will go wrong in spite of the care of those who are kind to them." He gave Godeschal Mariette's note and the five hundred francs she had sent. "Forgive me for opening it, but the maid said it was a matter of business.—You must get rid of Oscar."

"What trouble I have had with that poor little ne'er-do-well!" said Godeschal. "That scoundrel Georges Marest is his evil genius; he must avoid him like the plague, for I do not know what might happen if they met a third time."

"How is that?" asked Desroches, and Godeschal sketched the story of the practical joking on the journey to Presles.

"To be sure," said the lawyer. "I remember Joseph Bridau

told me something about that at the time. It was to that meeting that we owed the Comte de Sérizy's interest in Bridau's brother."

At this moment Moreau came in, for this suit over the Vandenesse property was an important affair to him. The Marquis wanted to sell the Vandenesse estate in lots, and his brother opposed such a proceeding.

Thus the land-agent was the recipient of the justifiable complaints and sinister prophecies fulminated by Desroches as against his second clerk; and the unhappy boy's most friendly protector was forced to the conclusion that Oscar's vanity was incorrigible.

"Make a pleader of him," said Desroches; "he only has to pass his final; in that branch of the law his faults may prove to be useful qualities, for conceit spurs the tongue of half of our advocates."

As it happened, Clapart was at this time out of health, and nursed by his wife, a painful and thankless task. The man worried the poor soul, who had hitherto never known how odious the nagging and spiteful taunts can be in which a half-imbecile creature gives vent to his irritaton when poverty drives him into a sort of cunning rage. Delighted to have a sharp dagger that he could drive home to her motherly heart, he had suspected the fears for the future which were suggested to the hapless woman by Oscar's conduct and faults. In fact, when a mother has received such a blow as she had felt from the adventure at Presles she lives in perpetual alarms; and by the way in which Madame Clapart cried up Oscar whenever he achieved a success, Clapart understood all her secret fears and would stir them up on the slightest pretext.

"Well, well, Oscar is getting on better than I expected of him. I always said his journey to Presles was only a blunder due to inexperience. Where is the young man who never made a mistake? Poor boy, he is heroic in his endurance of the privations he would never had known if his father had lived. God grant he may control his passions!" and so on.

So, while so many disasters were crowding on each other in

the Rue de Vendôme and the Rue de Béthisy, Clapart, sitting by the fire wrapped in a shabby dressing-gown, was watching his wife, who was busy cooking over the bedroom fire some broth, Clapart's herb tea, and her own breakfast.

"Good heavens! I wish I knew how things fell out yesterday. Oscar was to breakfast at the Rocher de Cancale, and spend the evening with some Marquise——"

"Oh! don't be in a hurry; sooner or later murder will out," retorted her husband. "Do you believe in the Marquise? Go on; a boy who has his five senses and a love of extravagances—as Oscar has, after all—can find Marquises in Spain costing their weight in gold! He will come home some day loaded with debt——"

"You don't know how to be cruel enough, and to drive me to despair!" exclaimed Madame Clapart. "You complained that my son ate up all your salary, and he never cost you a sou. For two years you have not had a fault to find with Oscar, and now he is second clerk, his uncle and Monsieur Moreau provide him with everything, and he has eight hundred francs a year of his own earning. If we have bread in our old age, we shall owe it to that dear boy. You really are too unjust."

"You consider my foresight an injustice?" said the sick man sourly.

There came at this moment a sharp ring at the bell. Madame Clapart ran to open the door, and then remained in the outer room, talking to Moreau, who had come himself to soften the blow that the news of Oscar's levity must be to his poor mother.

"What! He lost his master's money?" cried Madame Clapart in tears.

"Aha! what did I tell you?" said Clapart, who appeared like a spectre in the doorway of the drawing-room, to which he had shuffled across under the prompting of curiosity.

"But what is to be done with him?" said his wife, whose distress left her insensible to this stab.

"Well, if he bore my name," said Moreau, "I should calmly

allow him to be drawn for the conscription, and if he should be called to serve, I would not pay for a substitute. This is the second time that sheer vanity has brought him into mischief. Well, vanity may lead him to some brilliant action, which will win him promotion as a soldier. Six years' service will at any rate add a little weight to his feather-brain, and as he has only his final examination to pass, he will not do so badly if he finds himself a pleader at six-and-twenty, if he chooses to go to the bar after paying the blood-tax, as they say. This time, at any rate, he will have had his punishment, he will gain experience and acquire habits of subordination. He will have served his apprenticeship to life before serving it in the Law Courts."

"If that is the sentence you would pronounce on a son," said Madame Clapart, "I see that a father's heart is very unlike a mother's.—My poor Oscar—a soldier——?"

"Would you rather see him jump head foremost into the Seine after doing something to disgrace himself? He can never now be an attorney; do you think he is fitted yet to be an advocate? While waiting till he reaches years of discretion, what will he become? A thorough scamp; military discipline will at any rate preserve him from that."

"Could he not go into another office? His uncle Cardot would certainly pay for a substitute—and Oscar will dedicate his thesis to him——"

The clatter of a cab, in which was piled all Oscar's personal property, announced the wretched lad's return, and in a few minutes he made his appearance.

"So here you are, Master Joli-Cœur!" cried Clapart.

Oscar kissed his mother, and held out a hand to Monsieur Moreau, which that gentleman would not take. Oscar answered this contempt with a look to which indignation lent a firmness new to the bystanders.

"Listen, Monsieur Clapart," said the boy, so suddenly grown to be a man; "you worry my poor mother beyond endurance, and you have a right to do so; she is your wife—for her sins. But it is different with me. In a few months I

shall be of age, and you have no power over me even while I am a minor. I have never asked you for anything. Thanks to this gentleman, I have never cost you one sou, and I owe you no sort of gratitude; so, have the goodness to leave me in peace."

Clapart, startled by this apostrophe, went back to his arm-chair by the fire. The reasoning of the lawyer's clerk and the suppressed fury of a young man of twenty, who had just had a sharp lecture from his friend Godeschal, had reduced the sick man's imbecility to silence, once and for all.

"An error into which you would have been led quite as easily as I, at my age," said Oscar to Moreau, "made me commit a fault which Desroches thinks serious, but which is really trivial enough; I am far more vexed with myself for having taken Florentine, of the Gaîté theatre, for a Marquise, and actresses for women of rank, than for having lost fifteen hundred francs at a little orgy where everybody, even Godeschal, was somewhat screwed. This time, at any rate, I have hurt no one but myself. I am thoroughly cured.—If you will help me, Monsieur Moreau, I swear to you that in the course of the six years during which I must remain a clerk before I can practice——"

"Stop a bit!" said Moreau. "I have three children; I can make no promises."

"Well, well," said Madame Clapart, with a reproachful look at Moreau, "your uncle Cardot——"

"No more uncle Cardot for me," replied Oscar, and he related the adventure of the Rue de Vendôme.

Madame Clapart, feeling her knees give way under the weight of her body, dropped on one of the dining-room chairs as if a thunderbolt had fallen.

"Every possible misfortune at once!" said she, and fainted away.

Moreau lifted the poor woman in his arms, and carried her to her bed. Oscar stood motionless and speechless.

"There is nothing for you but to serve as a soldier," said the estate-agent, coming back again. "That idiot Clapart will

not last three months longer, it seems to me; your mother will not have a sou in the world: ought I not rather to keep for her the little money I can spare? This was what I could not say to you in her presence. As a soldier, you will earn your bread, and you may meditate on what life is to the penniless."

"I might draw a lucky number," said Oscar.

"And if you do?—Your mother has been a very good mother to you. She gave you an education, she started you in a good way; you have lost it; what could you do now? Without money, a man is helpless, as you now know, and you are not the man to begin all over again by pulling off your coat and putting on a workman's or artisan's blouse. And then your mother worships you.—Do you want to kill her? For she would die of seeing you fallen so low."

Oscar sat down, and could no longer control his tears, which flowed freely. He understood now a form of appeal which had been perfectly incomprehensible at the time of his first error.

"Penniless folks ought to be perfect!" said Moreau to himself, not appreciating how deeply true this cruel verdict was.

"My fate will soon be decided," said Oscar; "the numbers are drawn the day after to-morrow. Between this and then I will come to some decision."

Moreau, deeply grieved in spite of his austerity, left the family in the Rue de la Cerisaie to their despair.

Three days after Oscar drew Number 27. To help the poor lad, the ex-steward of Presles found courage enough to go to the Comte de Sérizy and beg his interest to get Oscar into the cavalry. As it happened, the Count's son, having come out well at his last examination on leaving the École Polytechnique, had been passed by favor, with the rank of sub-lieutenant, into the cavalry regiment commanded by the Duc de Maufrigneuse. And so, in the midst of his fall, Oscar had the small piece of luck of being enlisted in this fine regiment at the Comte de Sérizy's recommendation, with the promise of promotion to be quartermaster in a year's time.

Thus chance placed the lawyer's clerk under the command of Monsieur de Sérizy's son.

After some days of pining, Madame Clapart, who was deeply stricken by all these misfortunes, gave herself up to the remorse which is apt to come over mothers whose conduct has not been blameless, and who, as they grow old, are led to repent. She thought of herself as one accursed. She ascribed the miseries of her second marriage and all her son's ill-fortune to the vengeance of God, who was punishing her in expiation of the sins and pleasures of her youth. This idea soon became a conviction. The poor soul went to confession, for the first time in forty years, to the Vicar of the Church of Saint-Paul, the Abbé Gaudron, who plunged her into the practices of religion.

But a spirit so crushed and so loving as Madame Clapart's could not fail to become simply pious. The Aspasia of the Directory yearned to atone for her sins that she might bring the blessing of God down on the head of her beloved Oscar, and before long she had given herself up to the most earnest practices of devotion and works of piety. She believed that she had earned the favor of Heaven when she had succeeded in saving Monsieur Clapart, who, thanks to her care, lived to torment her; but she persisted in seeing in the tyranny of this half-witted old man the trials inflicted by Him who loves while He chastens us.

Oscar's conduct meanwhile was so satisfactory that in 1830 he was first quartermaster of the company under the Vicomte de Sérizy, equivalent in rank to a sub-lieutenant of the line, as the Duc de Maufrigneuse's regiment was attached to the King's guards. Oscar Husson was now five-and-twenty. As the regiments of Guards were always quartered in Paris, or within thirty leagues of the capital, he could see his mother from time to time and confide his sorrows to her, for he was clear-sighted enough to perceive that he could never rise to be an officer. At that time cavalry officers were almost always chosen from among the younger sons of the nobility,

and men without the distinguishing *de* got on but slowly. Oscar's whole ambition was to get out of the guards and enter some cavalry regiment of the line as a sub-lieutenant; and in the month of February 1830 Madame Clapart, through the interest of the Abbé Gaudron, now at the head of his parish, gained the favor of the Dauphiness, which secured Oscar's promotion.

Although the ambitious young soldier professed ardent devotion to the Bourbons, he was at heart a liberal. In the struggle, in 1830, he took the side of the people. This defection, which proved to be important by reason of the way in which it acted, drew public attention to Oscar Husson. In the moment of triumph, in the month of August, Oscar, promoted to be lieutenant, received the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and succeeded in obtaining the post of aide-de-camp to la Fayette, who made him captain in 1832. When this devotee to "the best of all Republics" was deprived of his command of the National Guard, Oscar Husson, whose devotion to the new royal family was almost fanaticism, was sent as major with a regiment to Africa on the occasion of the first expedition undertaken by the Prince. The Vicomte de Sérizy was now lieutenant-colonel of that regiment. At the fight at the Macta, where the Arabs remained masters of the field, Monsieur de Sérizy was left wounded under his dead horse. Oscar addressed his company.

"It is riding to our death," said he, "but we cannot desert our Colonel."

He was the first to charge the enemy, and his men, quite electrified, followed. The Arabs, in the shock of surprise at this furious and unexpected attack, allowed Oscar to pick up his Colonel, whom he took on his horse and rode off at a pelting gallop, though in this act, carried out in the midst of furious fighting, he had two cuts from a yataghan on the left arm.

Oscar's valiant conduct was rewarded by the Cross of an Officer of the Legion of Honor, and promotion to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He nursed the Vicomte de Sérizy with

devoted affection; the Comtesse de Sérizy joined her son and carried him to Toulon, where, as all the world knows, he died of his wounds. Madame de Sérizy did not part her son from the man who, after rescuing him from the Arabs, had cared for him with such unfailing devotion.

Oscar himself was so severely wounded that the surgeons called in by the Countess to attend her son pronounced amputation necessary. The Count forgave Oscar his follies on the occasion of the journey to Presles, and even regarded himself as the young man's debtor when he had buried his only surviving son in the chapel of the Château de Sérizy.

A long time after the battle of the Macta, an old lady dressed in black, leaning on the arm of a man of thirty-four, at once recognizable as a retired officer by the loss of one arm and the rosette of the Legion of Honor at his button-hole, was to be seen at eight o'clock one morning, waiting under the gateway of the Silver Lion, Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, till the diligence should be ready to start.

Pierrotin, the manager of the coach services of the Valley of the Oise, passing by Saint-Leu-Taverny and l'Isle-Adam, as far as Beaumont, would hardly have recognized in this bronzed officer that little Oscar Husson whom he had once driven to Presles. Madame Clapart, a widow at last, was quite as unrecognizable as her son. Clapart, one of the victims of Fieschi's machine, had done his wife a better turn by the manner of his death than he had ever done her in his life. Of course, Clapart, the idler, the lounger, had taken up a place on *his* Boulevard to see *his* legion reviewed. Thus the poor bigot had found her name down for a pension of fifteen hundred francs a year by the decree which indemnified the victims of this infernal machine.

The vehicle, to which four dappled gray horses were now being harnessed—steeds worthy of the *Messageries royales,*—was in four divisions, the *coupé,* the *interieur,* the *rotonde* behind, and the *imperiale* at top. It was identically the same as the diligences called *Gondoles,* which, in our day, still main-

tain a rivalry on the Versailles road with two lines of railway. Strong and light, well painted and clean, lined with good blue cloth, furnished with blinds of arabesque design and red morocco cushions, the *Hirondelle de l'Oise* could carry nineteen travelers. Pierrotin, though he was by this time fifty-six, was little changed. He still wore a blouse over his black coat, and still smoked his short pipe, as he watched two porters in stable-livery piling numerous packages on the roof of his coach.

"Have you taken seats?" he asked of Madame Clapart and Oscar, looking at them as if he were searching his memory for some association of ideas.

"Yes, two inside places, name of Bellejambe, my servant," said Oscar. "He was to take them when he left the house last evening."

"Oh, then monsieur is the new collector at Beaumont," said Pierrotin. "You are going down to take the place of Monsieur Margueron's nephew?"

"Yes," replied Oscar, pressing his mother's arm as a hint to her to say nothing. For now he in his turn wished to remain unknown for a time.

At this instant Oscar was startled by recognizing Georges' voice calling from the street:

"Have you a seat left, Pierrotin?"

"It strikes me that you might say Monsieur Pierrotin without breaking your jaw," said the coach-owner angrily.

But for the tone of his voice Oscar could never have recognized the practical joker who had twice brought him such ill-luck. Georges, almost bald, had but three or four locks of hair left above his ears, and carefully combed up to disguise his bald crown as far as possible. A development of fat in the wrong place, a bulbous stomach, had spoiled the elegant figure of the once handsome young man. Almost vulgar in shape and mien, Georges showed the traces of disaster in love, and of a life of constant debauchery, in a spotty red complexion, and thickened, vinous features. His eyes had lost the sparkle and eagerness of youth, which can only be preserved by decorous and studious habits.

Georges, dressed with evident indifference to his appearance, wore a pair of trousers with straps, but shabby, and of a style that demanded patent leather boots; the boots he wore, thick and badly polished, were at least three-quarters of a year old, which is in Paris as much as three years anywhere else. A shabby waistcoat, a tie elaborately knotted, though it was but an old bandanna, betrayed the covert penury to which a decayed dandy may be reduced. To crown all, at this early hour of the day Georges wore a dress-coat instead of a morning-coat, the symptom of positive poverty. This coat, which must have danced at many a ball, had fallen, like its owner, from the opulence it once represented, to the duties of daily scrub. The seams of the black cloth showed white ridges, the collar was greasy, and wear had pinked out the cuffs into a dog's tooth edge. Still, Georges was bold enough to invite attention by wearing lemon-colored gloves—rather dirty, to be sure, and on one finger the outline of a large ring was visible in black.

Round his tie, of which the ends were slipped through a pretentious gold ring, twined a brown silk chain in imitation of hair, ending no doubt in a watch. His hat, though stuck on with an air, showed more evidently than all these other symptoms the poverty of a man who never has sixteen francs to spend at the hatter's when he lives from hand to mouth. Florentine's *ci-devant* lover flourished a cane with a chased handle, silver-gilt, but horribly dinted. His blue trousers, tartan waistcoat, sky-blue tie, and red-striped cotton shirt, bore witness, in spite of so much squalor, to such a passion for show that the contrast was not merely laughable, but a lesson.

"And this is Georges?" said Oscar to himself. "A man I left in possession of thirty thousand francs a year!"

"Has Monsieur *de* Pierrotin still a vacant seat in his *coupé?*" asked Georges ironically.

"No, my *coupé* is taken by a peer of France, Monsieur Moreau's son-in-law, Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, with his wife and his mother-in-law. I have only a seat in the body of the coach."

"The deuce! It would seem that under every form of government peers of France travel in Pierrotin's conveyances! I will take the seat in the *intérieur*," said Georges, with a reminiscence of the journey with Monsieur de Sérizy.

He turned to stare at Oscar and the widow, but recognized neither mother nor son. Oscar was deeply tanned by the African sun; he had a very thick moustache and whiskers; his hollow cheeks and marked features were in harmony with his military deportment. The officer's rosette, the loss of an arm, the plain dark dress, would all have been enough to mislead Georges' memory, if indeed he remembered his former victim. As to Madame Clapart, whom he had scarcely seen on the former occasion, ten years spent in pious exercises of the severest kind had absolutely transformed her. No one could have imagined that this sort of Gray Sister hid one of the Aspasias of 1797.

A huge old man, plainly but very comfortably dressed, in whom Oscar recognized old Léger, came up slowly and heavily; he nodded familiarly to Pierrotin, who seemed to regard him with the respect due in all countries to millionaires.

"Heh! why, it is Père Léger! more ponderous than ever!" cried Georges.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?" asked the farmer very drily.

"What! Don't you remember Colonel Georges, Ali Pasha's friend? We traveled this road together, once upon a time, with the Comte de Sérizy, who preserved his incognito."

One of the commonest follies of persons who have come down in the world is insisting on recognizing people, and on being recognized.

"You are very much changed," said the old land-agent, now worth two millions of francs.

"Everything changes," said Georges. "Look at the Silver Lion inn, and at Pierrotin's coach, and see if they are the same as they were fourteen years since."

"Pierrotin is now owner of all the coaches that serve the

Oise Valley, and has very good vehicles," said Monsieur Léger. "He is a citizen now of Beaumont, and keeps an inn there where his coaches put up; he has a wife and daughter who know their business——"

An old man of about seventy came out of the inn and joined the group of travelers who were waiting to be told to get in.

"Come along, Papa Reybert!" said Léger. "We have no one to wait for now but your great man."

"Here he is," said the land-steward of Presles, turning to Joseph Bridau.

Neither Oscar nor Georges would have recognized the famous painter, for his face was the strangely worn countenance now so well known, and his manner was marked by the confidence born of success. His black overcoat displayed the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. His dress, which was careful in all points, showed that he was on his way to some country fête.

At this moment a clerk with a paper in his hand bustled out of an office constructed at one end of the old kitchen of the Silver Lion, and stood in front of the still unoccupied *coupé.*

"Monsieur and Madame de Canalis, three places!" he called out, then coming to the *intérieur,* he said, "Monsieur Bellejambe, two places; Monsieur Reybert, three; monsieur—your name?" added he to Georges.

"Georges Marest," replied the fallen hero in an undertone.

The clerk then went to the *rotonde* (the omnibus at the back of the old French diligence), round which stood a little crowds of nurses, country folks, and small shopkeepers, taking leave of each other. After packing the six travelers, the clerk called the names of four youths who clambered up on to the seat on the *imperiale,* and then said, "Right behind!" as the signal for starting.

Pierrotin took his place by the driver, a young man in a blouse, who in his turn said, "Get' up," to his horses.

The coach, set in motion by four horses purchased at Roye, was pulled up the hill of the Faubourg Saint-Denis at a gentle trot, but having once gained the level above Saint-Laurent,

it spun along like a mail-coach as far as Saint-Denis in forty minutes. They did not stop at the inn famous for cheese-cakes, but turned off to the left of Saint-Denis, down the valley of Montmorency.

It was here, as they turned, that Georges broke the silence which had been kept so far by the travelers who were studying each other.

"We keep rather better time than we did fifteen years ago," said he, taking out a silver watch. "Heh! Père Léger?"

"People are so condescending as to address me as Monsieur Léger," retorted the millionaire.

"Why, this is our blusterer of my first journey to Presles," exclaimed Joseph Bridau. "Well, and have you been fighting new campaigns in Asia, Africa, and America?" asked the great painter.

"By Jupiter! I helped in the Revolution of July, and that was enough, for it ruined me."

"Oho! you helped in the Revolution of July, did you?" said Bridau. "I am not surprised, for I never could believe what I was told, that it made itself."

"How strangely meetings come about," said Monsieur Léger, turning to Reybert. "Here, Papa Reybert, you see the notary's clerk to whom you owe indirectly your place as steward of the estates of Sérizy."

"But we miss Mistigris, now so famous as Léon de Lora," said Joseph Bridau, "and the little fellow who was such a fool as to tell the Count all about his skin complaints—which he has cured at last—and his wife, from whom he has parted to die in peace."

"Monsieur le Comte is missing too," said Reybert.

"Oh!" said Bridau sadly, "I am afraid that the last expedition he will ever make will be to l'Isle-Adam, to be present at my wedding."

"He still drives out in the park," remarked old Reybert.

"Does his wife come often to see him?" asked Léger.

"Once a month," replied Reybert. "She still prefers Paris; she arranged the marriage of her favorite niece, Mademoiselle

du Rouvre, to a very rich young Pole, Count Laginski, in September last——"

"And who will inherit Monsieur de Sérizy's property?" asked Madame Clapart.

"His wife.—She will bury him," replied Georges. "The Countess is still handsome for a woman of fifty-four, still very elegant, and at a distance quite illusory——"

"Elusive, you mean? She will always elude you," Léger put in, wishing, perhaps, to turn the tables on the man who had mystified him.

"I respect her," said Georges in reply.—"But, by the way, what became of that steward who was so abruptly dismissed in those days?"

"Moreau?" said Léger. "He is deputy now for Seine-et-Oise."

"Oh, the famous *centre* Moreau (of l'Oise)?" said Georges.

"Yes," replied Léger. "*Monsieur* Moreau (of l'Oise). He helped rather more than you in the Revolution of July, and he has lately bought the splendid estate of Pointel, between Presles and Beaumont."

"What, close to the place he managed, and so near his old master! That is in very bad taste," cried Georges.

"Do not talk so loud," said Monsieur de Reybert, "for Madame Moreau and her daughter, the Baronne de Canalis, and her son-in-law, the late minister, are in the coupé."

"What fortune did he give her that the great orator would marry his daughter?"

"Well, somewhere about two millions," said Léger.

"He had a pretty taste in millions," said Georges, smiling, and in an undertone, "He began feathering his nest at Presles——"

"Say no more about Monsieur Moreau," exclaimed Oscar. "It seems to me that you might have learned to hold your tongue in a public conveyance!"

Joseph Bridau looked for a few seconds at the one-armed officer, and then said:

"Monsieur is not an ambassador, but his rosette shows that

he has risen in the world; and nobly too, for my brother and General Girodeau have often mentioned you in their despatches——"

"Oscar Husson!" exclaimed Georges. "On my honor, but for your voice, I should never have recognized you."

"Ah! is this the gentleman who so bravely carried off the Vicomte Jules de Sérizy from the Arabs?" asked Reybert, "and to whom Monsieur le Comte has given the collectorship at Beaumont pending his appointment to Pontoise?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Oscar.

"Well, then," said the painter, "I hope, monsieur, that you will do me the pleasure of being present at my marriage, at l'Isle-Adam."

"Whom are you marrying?" asked Oscar.

"Mademoiselle Léger, Monsieur de Reybert's granddaughter. Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy was good enough to arrange the matter for me. I owe him much as an artist, and he was anxious to establish my fortune before his death—I had scarcely thought of it——"

"Then Père Léger married?" said Georges.

"My daughter," said Monsieur de Reybert, "and without any money."

"And he has children?"

"One daughter. Quite enough for a widower who had no other children," said Père Léger. "And, like my partner Moreau, I shall have a famous man for my son-in-law."

"So you still live at l'Isle-Adam?" said Georges to Monsieur Léger, almost respectfully.

"Yes; I purchased Cassan."

"Well, I am happy in having chosen this particular day for doing the Oise Valley," said Georges, "for you may do me a service, gentlemen."

"In what way?" asked Léger.

"Well, thus," said Georges. "I am employed by the Society of *l'Espérance,* which has just been incorporated, and its by-laws approved by letters patent from the King. This institution is, in ten years, to give marriage portions to girls, and

annuities to old people; it will pay for the education of children; in short, it takes care of everybody——"

"So I should think!" said old Léger, laughing. "In short, you are an insurance agent."

"No, monsieur, I am Inspector-General, instructed to establish agencies and correspondents with the Company throughout France; I am acting only till the agents are appointed; for it is a delicate and difficult matter to find honest men——"

"But how did you lose your thirty thousand francs a year?" asked Oscar.

"As you lost your arm!" the ex-notary's clerk replied sharply to the ex-attorney's clerk.

"Then you invested your fortune in some brilliant deed?" said Oscar, with somewhat bitter irony.

"By Jupiter! my investments are a sore subject. I have more deeds than enough."

They had reached Saint-Leu-Taverny, where the travelers got out while they changed horses. Oscar admired the briskness with which Pierrotin unbuckled the straps of the swing-bar, while his driver took out the leaders.

"Poor Pierrotin!" thought he. "Like me, he has not risen much in life. Georges has sunk into poverty. All the others, by speculation and skill, have made fortunes. Do we breakfast here, Pierrotin?" he asked, clapping the man on the shoulder.

"I am not the driver," said Pierrotin.

"What are you, then?" asked Colonel Husson.

"I am the owner," replied Pierrotin.

"Well, well, do not quarrel with an old friend," said Oscar, pointing to his mother, but still with a patronizing air; "do you not remember Madame Clapart?"

It was the more graceful of Oscar to name his mother to Pierrotin, because at this moment Madame Moreau (de l'Oise) had got out of the *coupé* and looked scornfully at Oscar and his mother as she heard the name.

"On my honor, madame, I should never have known you; nor you either, monsieur. You get it hot in Africa, it would seem?"

The disdainful pity Oscar had felt for Pierrotin was the last blunder into which vanity betrayed the hero of this Scene; and for that he was punished, though not too severely. On this wise: Two months after he had settled at Beaumont-sur-Oise, Oscar paid his court to Mademoiselle Georgette Pierrotin, whose fortune amounted to a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and by the end of the winter of 1838 he married the daughter of the owner of the Oise Valley coach service.

The results of the journey to Presles had given Oscar discretion, the evening at Florentine's had disciplined his honesty, the hardships of a military life had taught him the value of social distinctions and submission to fate. He was prudent, capable, and consequently happy. The Comte de Sérizy, before his death, obtained for Oscar the place of Revenue Collector at Pontoise. The influence of Monsieur Moreau (de l'Oise), of the Comtesse de Sérizy, and of Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, who, sooner or later, will again have a seat in the Ministry, will secure Monsieur Husson's promotion to the post of Receiver-General, and the Camusots now recognize him as a relation.

Oscar is a commonplace man, gentle, unpretentious, and modest; faithful—like the Government he serves—to the happy medium in all things. He invites neither envy nor scorn. In short, he is the modern French citizen.

PARIS, *February* 1842.

A SECOND HOME

To Madame la Comtesse Louise de Turheim as a token of remembrance and affectionate respect.

THE Rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, formerly one of the darkest and most tortuous of the streets about the Hôtel de Ville, zigzagged round the little gardens of the Paris Préfecture, and ended at the Rue Martroi, exactly at the angle of an old wall now pulled down. Here stood the turnstile to which the street owed its name; it was not removed till 1823, when the Municipality built a ballroom on the garden plot adjoining the Hôtel de Ville, for the fête given in honor of the Duc d'Angoulême on his return from Spain.

The widest part of the Rue du Tourniquet was the end opening into the Rue de la Tixeranderie, and even there it was less than six feet across. Hence in rainy weather the gutter water was soon deep at the foot of the old houses, sweeping down with it the dust and refuse deposited at the corner-stones by the residents. As the dust-carts could not pass through, the inhabitants trusted to storms to wash their always miry alley; for how could it be clean? When the summer sun shed its perpendicular rays on Paris like a sheet of gold, but as piercing as the point of a sword, it lighted up the blackness of this street for a few minutes without drying the permanent damp that rose from the ground-floor to the first story of these dark and silent tenements.

The residents, who lighted their lamps at five o'clock in the month of June, in winter never put them out. To this day the enterprising wayfarer who should approach the Marais along the quays, past the end of the Rue du Chaume, the Rues de l'Homme Armé, des Billettes, and des Deux-Portes, all

leading to the Rue du Tourniquet, might think he had passed through cellars all the way.

Almost all the streets of old Paris, of which ancient chronicles laud the magnificence, were like this damp and gloomy labyrinth, where antiquaries still find historical curiosities to admire. For instance, on the house then forming the corner where the Rue du Tourniquet joined the Rue de la Tixeranderie, the clamps might still be seen of two strong iron rings fixed to the wall, the relics of the chains put up every night by the watch to secure public safety.

This house, remarkable for its antiquity, had been constructed in a way that bore witness to the unhealthiness of these old dwellings; for, to preserve the ground-floor from damp, the arches of the cellars rose about two feet above the soil, and the house was entered up three outside steps. The door was crowned by a closed arch, of which the keystone bore a female head and some time-eaten arabesques. Three windows, their sills about five feet from the ground, belonged to a small set of rooms looking out on the Rue du Tourniquet, whence they derived their light. These windows were protected by strong iron bars, very wide apart, and ending below in an outward curve like the bars of a baker's window.

If any passer-by during the day were curious enough to peep into the two rooms forming this little dwelling, he could see nothing; for only under the sun of July could he discern, in the second room, two beds hung with green serge, placed side by side under the paneling of an old-fashioned alcove; but in the afternoon, by about three o'clock, when the candles were lighted, through the pane of the first room an old woman might be seen sitting on a stool by the fireplace, where she nursed the fire in a brazier, to simmer a stew, such as porters' wives are expert in. A few kitchen utensils, hung up against the wall, were visible in the twilight.

At that hour an old table on trestles, but bare of linen, was laid with pewter-spoons, and the dish concocted by the old woman. Three wretched chairs were all the furniture of this room, which was at once the kitchen and the dining-room.

Over the chimney-shelf were a piece of looking-glass, a tinder-box, three glasses, some matches, and a large, cracked white jug. Still, the floor, the utensils, the fireplace, all gave a pleasant sense of the perfect cleanliness and thrift that pervaded the dull and gloomy home.

The old woman's pale, withered face was quite in harmony with the darkness of the street and the mustiness of the place. As she sat there, motionless, in her chair, it might have been thought that she was as inseparable from the house as a snail from its brown shell; her face, alert with a vague expression of mischief, was framed in a flat cap made of net, which barely covered her white hair; her fine, gray eyes were as quiet as the street, and the many wrinkles in her face might be compared to the cracks in the walls. Whether she had been born to poverty, or had fallen from some past splendor, she now seemed to have been long resigned to her melancholy existence.

From sunrise till dark, excepting when she was getting a meal ready, or, with a basket on her arm, was out purchasing provisions, the old woman sat in the adjoining room by the further window, opposite a young girl. At any hour of the day the passer-by could see the needlewoman seated in an old, red velvet chair, bending over an embroidery frame, and stitching indefatigably.

Her mother had a green pillow on her knee, and busied herself with hand-made net; but her fingers could move the bobbins but slowly; her sight was feeble, for on her nose there rested a pair of those antiquated spectacles which keep their place on the nostrils by the grip of a spring. By night these two hardworking women set a lamp between them; and the light, concentrated by two globe-shaped bottles of water, showed the elder the fine network made by the threads on her pillow, and the younger the most delicate details of the pattern she was embroidering. The outward bend of the window bars had allowed the girl to rest a box of earth on the window-sill, in which grew some sweet peas, nasturtiums, a sickly little honeysuckle, and some convolvulus that twined its frail stems

up the iron bars. These etiolated plants produced a few pale flowers, and added a touch of indescribable sadness and sweetness to the picture offered by this window, in which the two figures were appropriately framed.

The most selfish soul who chanced to see this domestic scene would carry away with him a perfect image of the life led in Paris by the working class of women, for the embroideress evidently lived by her needle. Many, as they passed through the turnstile, found themselves wondering how a girl could preserve her color, living in such a cellar. A student of lively imagination, going that way to cross to the Quartier-Latin, would compare this obscure and vegetative life to that of the ivy that clung to these chill walls, to that of the peasants born to labor, who are born, toil, and die unknown to the world they have helped to feed. A house-owner, after studying the house with the eye of a valuer, would have said, "What will become of those two women if embroidery should go out of fashion?" Among the men who, having some appointment at the Hôtel de Ville or the Palais de Justice, were obliged to go through this street at fixed hours, either on their way to business or on their return home, there may have been some charitable soul. Some widower or Adonis of forty, brought so often into the secrets of these sad lives, may perhaps have reckoned on the poverty of this mother and daughter, and have hoped to become the master at no great cost of the innocent work-woman, whose nimble and dimpled fingers, youthful figure, and white skin—a charm due, no doubt, to living in this sunless street—had excited his admiration. Perhaps, again, some honest clerk, with twelve hundred francs a year, seeing every day the diligence the girl gave to her needle, and appreciating the purity of her life, was only waiting for improved prospects to unite one humble life with another, one form of toil to another, and to bring at any rate a man's arm and a calm affection, pale-hued like the flowers in the window, to uphold this home.

Vague hope certainly gave life to the mother's dim, gray eyes. Every morning, after the most frugal breakfast, she

took up her pillow, though chiefly for the look of the thing, for she would lay her spectacles on a little mahogany work-table as old as herself, and look out of window from about half-past eight till ten at the regular passers in the street; she caught their glances, remarked on their gait, their dress, their countenance, and almost seemed to be offering her daughter, her gossiping eyes so evidently tried to attract some magnetic sympathy by manœuvres worthy of the stage. It was evident that this little review was as good as a play to her, and perhaps her single amusement.

The daughter rarely looked up. Modesty, or a painful consciousness of poverty, seemed to keep her eyes riveted to the work-frame; and only some exclamation of surprise from her mother moved her to show her small features. Then a clerk in a new coat, or who unexpectedly appeared with a woman on his arm, might catch sight of the girl's slightly upturned nose, her rosy mouth, and gray eyes, always bright and lively in spite of her fatiguing toil. Her late hours had left a trace on her face by a pale circle marked under each eye on the fresh rosiness of her cheeks. The poor child looked as if she were made for love and cheerfulness—for love, which had drawn two perfect arches above her eyelids, and had given her such a mass of chestnut hair, that she might have hidden under it as under a tent, impenetrable to the lover's eye—for cheerfulness, which gave quivering animation to her nostrils, which carved two dimples in her rosy cheeks, and made her quick to forget her troubles; cheerfulness, the blossom of hope, which gave her strength to look out without shuddering on the barren path of life.

The girl's hair was always carefully dressed. After the manner of Paris needlewomen, her toilet seemed to her quite complete when she had brushed her hair smooth and tucked up the little short curls that played on each temple in contrast with the whiteness of her skin. The growth of it on the back of her neck was so pretty, and the brown line, so clearly traced, gave such a pleasing idea of her youth and charm, that the observer, seeing her bent over her work, and un-

moved by any sound, was inclined to think of her as a coquette. Such inviting promise had excited the interest of more than one young man, who turned round in the vain hope of seeing that modest countenance.

"Caroline, there is a new face that passes regularly by, and not one of the old ones is to compare with it."

These words, spoken in a low voice by her mother one August morning in 1815, had vanquished the young needlewoman's indifference, and she looked out on the street; but in vain, the stranger was gone.

"Where has he flown to?" said she.

"He will come back no doubt at four; I shall see him coming, and will touch your foot with mine. I am sure he will come back; he has been through the street regularly for the last three days; but his hours vary. The first day he came by at six o'clock, the day before yesterday it was four, yesterday as early as three. I remember seeing him occasionally some time ago. He is some clerk in the Préfet's office who has moved to the Marais.—Why!" she exclaimed, after glancing down the street, "our gentleman of the brown coat has taken to wearing a wig; how much it alters him!"

The gentleman of the brown coat was, it would seem, the individual who commonly closed the daily procession, for the old woman put on her spectacles and took up her work with a sigh, glancing at her daughter with so strange a look that Lavater himself would have found it difficult to interpret. Admiration, gratitude, a sort of hope for better days, were mingled with pride at having such a pretty daughter.

At about four in the afternoon the old lady pushed her foot against Caroline's, and the girl looked up quickly enough to see the new actor, whose regular advent would thenceforth lend variety to the scene. He was tall and thin, and wore black, a man of about forty, with a certain solemnity of demeanor; as his piercing hazel eye met the old woman's dull gaze, he made her quake, for she felt as though he had the gift of reading hearts, or much practice in it, and his presence

must surely be as icy as the air of this dank street. Was the dull, sallow complexion of that ominous face due to excess of work, or the result of delicate health?

The old woman supplied twenty different answers to this question; but Caroline, next day, discerned the lines of long mental suffering on that brow that was so prompt to frown. The rather hollow cheeks of the Unknown bore the stamp of the seal which sorrow sets on its victims as if to grant them the consolation of common recognition and brotherly union for resistance. Though the girl's expression was at first one of lively but innocent curiosity, it assumed a look of gentle sympathy as the stranger receded from view, like the last relation following in a funeral train.

The heat of the weather was so great, and the gentleman was so absent-minded, that he had taken off his hat and forgotten to put it on again as he went down the squalid street. Caroline could see the stern look given to his countenance by the way the hair was brushed from his forehead. The strong impression, devoid of charm, made on the girl by this man's appearance was totally unlike any sensation produced by the other passengers who used the street; for the first time in her life she was moved to pity for some one else than herself and her mother; she made no reply to the absurd conjectures that supplied material for the old woman's provoking volubility, and drew her long needle in silence through the web of stretched net; she only regretted not having seen the stranger more closely, and looked forward to the morrow to form a definite opinion of him.

It was the first time, indeed, that a man passing down the street had ever given rise to much thought in her mind. She generally had nothing but a smile in response to her mother's hypotheses, for the old woman looked on every passer-by as a possible protector for her daughter. And if such suggestions, so crudely presented, gave rise to no evil thoughts in Caroline's mind, her indifference must be ascribed to the persistent and unfortunately inevitable toil in which the energies of her sweet youth were being spent, and which would infal-

libly mar the clearness of her eyes or steal from her fresh cheeks the bloom that still colored them.

For two months or more the "Black Gentleman"—the name they had given him—was erratic in his movements; he did not always come down the Rue du Tourniquet; the old woman sometimes saw him in the evening when he had not passed in the morning, and he did not come by at such regular hours as the clerks who served Madame Crochard instead of a clock; moreover, excepting on the first occasion, when his look had given the old mother a sense of alarm, his eyes had never once dwelt on the weird picture of these two female gnomes. With the exception of two carriage-gates and a dark ironmonger's shop, there were in the Rue du Tourniquet only barred windows, giving light to the staircases of the neighboring houses; thus the stranger's lack of curiosity was not to be accounted for by the presence of dangerous rivals; and Madame Crochard was greatly piqued to see her "Black Gentleman" always lost in thought, his eyes fixed on the ground, or straight before him, as though he hoped to read the future in the fog of the Rue du Tourniquet. However, one morning, about the middle of September, Caroline Crochard's roguish face stood out so brightly against the dark background of the room, looking so fresh among the belated flowers and faded leaves that twined round the window-bars, the daily scene was gay with such contrasts of light and shade, of pink and white blending with the light material on which the pretty needlewoman was working, and with the red and brown hues of the chairs, that the stranger gazed very attentively at the effects of this living picture. In point of fact, the old woman, provoked by her "Black Gentleman's" indifference, had made such a clatter with her bobbins that the gloomy and pensive passer-by was perhaps prompted to look up by the unusual noise.

The stranger merely exchanged glances with Caroline, swift indeed, but enough to effect a certain contact between their souls, and both were aware that they would think of each other. When the stranger came by again, at four in the

afternoon, Caroline recognized the sound of his step on the echoing pavement; they looked steadily at each other, and with evident purpose; his eyes had an expression of kindliness which made him smile, and Caroline colored; the old mother noted them both with satisfaction. Ever after that memorable afternoon, the Gentleman in Black went by twice a day, with rare exceptions, which both the women observed. They concluded from the irregularity of the hours of his homecoming that he was not released so early, nor so precisely punctual as a subordinate official.

All through the first three winter months, twice a day, Caroline and the stranger thus saw each other for so long as it took him to traverse the piece of road that lay along the length of the door and three windows of the house. Day after day this brief interview had a hue of friendly sympathy which at last had acquired a sort of fraternal kindness. Caroline and the stranger seemed to understand each other from the first; and then, by dint of scrutinizing each other's faces, they learned to know them well. Ere long it came to be, as it were, a visit that the Unknown owed to Caroline; if by any chance her Gentleman in Black went by without bestowing on her the half-smile of his expressive lips, or the cordial glance of his brown eyes, something was missing to her all day. She felt as an old man does to whom the daily study of a newspaper is such an indispensable pleasure that on the day after any great holiday he wanders about quite lost, and seeking, as much out of vagueness as for want of patience, the sheet by which he cheats an hour of life.

But these brief meetings had the charm of intimate friendliness, quite as much for the stranger as for Caroline. The girl could no more hide a vexation, a grief, or some slight ailment from the keen eye of her appreciative friend than he could conceal anxiety from hers.

"He must have had some trouble yesterday," was the thought that constantly arose in the embroideress' mind as she saw some change in the features of the "Black Gentleman."

"Oh, he has been working too hard!" was a reflection due to another shade of expression which Caroline could discern.

The stranger, on his part, could guess when the girl had spent Sunday in finishing a dress, and he felt an interest in the pattern. As quarter-day came near he could see that her pretty face was clouded by anxiety, and he could guess when Caroline had sat up late at work; but above all, he noted how the gloomy thoughts that dimmed the cheerful and delicate features of her young face gradually vanished by degrees as their acquaintance ripened. When winter had killed the climbers and plants of her window garden, and the window was kept closed, it was not without a smile of gentle amusement that the stranger observed the concentration of the light within, just at the level of Caroline's head. The very small fire and the frosty red of the two women's faces betrayed the poverty of their home; but if ever his own countenance expressed regretful compassion, the girl proudly met it with assumed cheerfulness.

Meanwhile the feelings that had arisen in their hearts remained buried there, no incident occurring to reveal to either of them how deep and strong they were in the other; they had never even heard the sound of each other's voice. These mute friends were even on their guard against any nearer acquaintance, as though it meant disaster. Each seemed to fear lest it should bring on the other some grief more serious than those they felt tempted to share. Was it shyness or friendship that checked them? Was it a dread of meeting with selfishness, or the odious distrust which sunders all the residents within the walls of a populous city? Did the voice of conscience warn them of approaching danger? It would be impossible to explain the instinct which made them as much enemies as friends, at once indifferent and attached, drawn to each other by impulse, and severed by circumstance. Each perhaps hoped to preserve a cherished illusion. It might almost have been thought that the stranger feared lest he should hear some vulgar word from those lips as fresh and pure as a flower, and that Caroline felt herself unworthy of the mysterious personage who was evidently possessed of power and wealth.

As to Madame Crochard, that tender mother, almost angry at her daughter's persistent lack of decisiveness, now showed a sulky face to the "Black Gentleman," on whom she had hitherto smiled with a sort of benevolent servility. Never before had she complained so bitterly of being compelled, at her age, to do the cooking; never had her catarrh and her rheumatism wrung so many groans from her; finally, she could not, this winter, promise so many ells of net as Caroline had hitherto been able to count on.

Under these circumstances, and towards the end of December, at the time when bread was dearest, and that dearth of corn was beginning to be felt which made the year 1816 so hard on the poor, the stranger observed on the features of the girl whose name was still unknown to him, the painful traces of a secret sorrow which his kindest smiles could not dispel. Before long he saw in Caroline's eyes the dimness attributable to long hours at night. One night, towards the end of the month, the Gentleman in Black passed down the Rue du Tourniquet at the quite unwonted hour of one in the morning. The perfect silence allowed of his hearing before passing the house the lachrymose voice of the old mother, and Caroline's even sadder tones, mingling with the swish of a shower of sleet. He crept along as slowly as he could; and then, at the risk of being taken up by the police, he stood still below the window to hear the mother and daughter, while watching them through the largest of the holes in the yellow muslin curtains, which were eaten away by wear as a cabbage leaf is riddled by caterpillars. The inquisitive stranger saw a sheet of paper on the table that stood between the two work-frames, and on which stood the lamp and the globes filled with water. He at once identified it as a writ. Madame Crochard was weeping, and Caroline's voice was thick, and had lost its sweet, caressing tone.

"Why be so heartbroken, mother? Monsieur Molineux will not sell us up or turn us out before I have finished this dress; only two nights more and I shall take it home to Madame Roguin."

"And supposing she keeps you waiting as usual?—And will the money for the gown pay the baker too?"

The spectator of this scene had long practice in reading faces; he fancied he could discern that the mother's grief was as false as the daughter's was genuine; he turned away, and presently came beck. When he next peeped through the hole in the curtain, Madame Crochard was in bed. The young needlewoman, bending over her frame, was embroidering with indefatigable diligence; on the table, with the writ, lay a triangular hunch of bread, placed there, no doubt, to sustain her in the night and to remind her of the reward of her industry. The stranger was tremulous with pity and sympathy; he threw his purse in through a cracked pane so that it should fall at the girl's feet; and then, without waiting to enjoy her surprise, he escaped, his cheeks tingling.

Next morning the shy and melancholy stranger went past with a look of deep preoccupation, but he could not escape Caroline's gratitude; she had opened her window and affected to be digging in the square window-box buried in snow, a pretext of which the clumsy ingenuity plainly told her benefactor that she had been resolved not to see him only through the pane. Her eyes were full of tears as she bowed her head, as much as to say to her benefactor, "I can only repay you from my heart."

But the Gentleman in Black affected not to understand the meaning of this sincere gratitude. In the evening, as he came by, Caroline was busy mending the window with a sheet of paper, and she smiled at him, showing her row of pearly teeth like a promise. Thenceforth the Stranger went another way, and was no more seen in the Rue du Tourniquet.

It was one day early in the following May that, as Caroline was giving the roots of the honeysuckle a glass of water, one Saturday morning, she caught sight of a narrow strip of cloudless blue between the black lines of houses, and said to her mother:

"Mamma, we must go to-morrow for a trip to Montmorency!"

She had scarcely uttered the words, in a tone of glee, when the Gentleman in Black came by, sadder and more dejected than ever. Caroline's innocent and ingratiating glance might have been taken for an invitation. And, in fact, on the following day, when Madame Crochard, dressed in a pelisse of claret-colored merinos, a silk bonnet, and striped shawl of an imitation Indian pattern, came out to choose seats in a chaise at the corner of the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis and the Rue d'Enghien, there she found her Unknown standing like a man waiting for his wife. A smile of pleasure lighted up the Stranger's face when his eye fell on Caroline, her neat feet shod in plum-colored prunella gaiters, and her white dress tossed by a breeze that would have been fatal to an ill-made woman, but which displayed her graceful form. Her face, shaded by a rice-straw bonnet lined with pink silk, seemed to beam with a reflection from heaven; her broad, plum-colored belt set off a waist he could have spanned; her hair, parted in two brown bands over a forehead as white as snow, gave her an expression of innocence which no other feature contradicted. Enjoyment seemed to have made Caroline as light as the straw of her hat; but when she saw the Gentleman in Black, radiant hope suddenly eclipsed her bright dress and her beauty. The Stranger, who appeared to be in doubt, had not perhaps made up his mind to be the girl's escort for the day till this revelation of the delight she felt on seeing him. He at once hired a vehicle with a fairly good horse, to drive to Saint-Leu-Taverny, and he offered Madame Crochard and her daughter seats by his side. The mother accepted without ado; but presently, when they were already on the way to Saint-Denis, she was by way of having scruples, and made a few civil speeches as to the possible inconvenience two women might cause their companion.

"Perhaps, monsieur, you wished to drive alone to Saint-Leu-Taverny," said she, with affected simplicity.

Before long she complained of the heat, and especially of her cough, which, she said, had hindered her from closing her eyes all night; and by the time the carriage had reached Saint-

Denis, Madame Crochard seemed to be fast asleep. Her snores, indeed, seemed, to the Gentleman in Black, rather doubtfully genuine, and he frowned as he looked at the old woman with a very suspicious eye.

"Oh, she is fast asleep," said Caroline guilelessly; "she never ceased coughing all night. She must be very tired."

Her companion made no reply, but he looked at the girl with a smile that seemed to say:

"Poor child, you little know your mother!"

However, in spite of his distrust, as the chaise made its way down the long avenue of poplars leading to Eaubonne, the Stranger thought that Madame Crochard was really asleep; perhaps he did not care to inquire how far her slumbers were genuine or feigned. Whether it were that the brilliant sky, the pure country air, and the heady fragrance of the first green shoots of the poplars, the catkins of willow, and the flowers of the blackthorn had inclined his heart to open like all the nature around him; or that any longer restraint was too oppressive while Caroline's sparkling eyes responded to his own, the Gentleman in Black entered on a conversation with his young companion, as aimless as the swaying of the branches in the wind, as devious as the flitting of the butterflies in the azure air, as illogical as the melodious murmur of the fields, and, like it, full of mysterious love. At that season is not the rural country as tremulous as a bride that has donned her marriage robe; does it not invite the coldest soul to be happy? What heart could remain unthawed, and what lips could keep its secret, on leaving the gloomy streets of the Marais for the first time since the previous autumn, and entering the smiling and picturesque valley of Montmorency; on seeing it in the morning light, its endless horizons receding from view; and then lifting a charmed gaze to eyes which expressed no less infinitude mingled with love?

The Stranger discovered that Caroline was sprightly rather than witty, affectionate, but ill educated; but while her laugh was giddy, her words promised genuine feeling. When, in response to her companion's shrewd questioning, the girl

spoke with the heartfelt effusiveness of which the lower classes are lavish, not guarding it with reticence like people of the world, the Black Gentleman's face brightened, and seemed to renew its youth. His countenance by degrees lost the sadness that lent sternness to his features, and little by little they gained a look of handsome youthfulness which made Caroline proud and happy. The pretty needlewoman guessed that her new friend had been long weaned from tenderness and love, and no longer believed in the devotion of woman. Finally, some unexpected sally in Caroline's light prattle lifted the last veil that concealed the real youth and genuine character of the Stranger's physiognomy; he seemed to bid farewell forever to the ideas that haunted him, and showed the natural liveliness that lay beneath the solemnity of his expression.

Their conversation had insensibly become so intimate, that by the time when the carriage stopped at the first houses of the straggling village of Saint-Leu, Caroline was calling the gentleman Monsieur Roger. Then for the first time the old mother awoke.

"Caroline, she has heard everything!" said Roger suspiciously in the girl's ear.

Caroline's reply was an exquisite smile of disbelief, which dissipated the dark cloud that his fear of some plot on the old woman's part had brought to this suspicious mortal's brow. Madame Crochard was amazed at nothing, approved of everything, followed her daughter and Monsieur Roger into the park, where the two young people had agreed to wander through the smiling meadows and fragrant copses made famous by the taste of Queen Hortense.

"Good heavens! how lovely!" exclaimed Caroline when, standing on the green ridge where the forest of Montmorency begins, she saw lying at her feet the wide valley with its combes sheltering scattered villages, its horizon of blue hills, its church towers, its meadows and fields, whence a murmur came up, to die on her ear like the swell of the ocean. The three wanderers made their way by the bank of an artificial stream and

came to the Swiss valley, where stands a châlet that had more than once given shelter to Hortense and Napoleon. When Caroline had seated herself with pious reverence on the mossy wooden bench where kings and princesses and the Emperor had rested, Madame Crochard expressed a wish to have a nearer view of a bridge that hung across between two rocks at some little distance, and bent her steps towards that rural curiosity, leaving her daughter in Monsieur Roger's care, though telling them that she would not go out of sight.

"What, poor child!" cried Roger, "have you never longed for wealth and the pleasures of luxury? Have you never wished that you might wear the beautiful dresses you embroider?"

"It would not be the truth, Monsieur Roger, if I were to tell you that I never think how happy people must be who are rich. Oh yes! I often fancy, especially when I am going to sleep, how glad I should be to see my poor mother no longer compelled to go out, whatever the weather, to buy our little provisions, at her age. I should like her to have a servant who, every morning before she was up, would bring her up her coffee, nicely sweetened with white sugar. And she loves reading novels, poor dear soul! Well, and I would rather see her wearing out her eyes over her favorite books than over twisting her bobbins from morning till night. And again, she ought to have a little good wine. In short, I should like to see her comfortable—she is so good."

"Then she has shown you great kindness?"

"Oh yes," said the girl, in a tone of conviction. Then, after a short pause, during which the two young people stood watching Madame Crochard, who had got to the middle of the rustic bridge, and was shaking her finger at them, Caroline went on:

"Oh yes, she has been so good to me. What care she took of me when I was little! She sold her last silver forks to apprentice me to the old maid who taught me to embroider.—And my poor father! What did she not go through to make him end his days in happiness!" The girl shivered at the remembrance, and hid her face in her hands.—"Well! come! let us forget past sorrows!" she added, trying to rally her high

spirits. She blushed as she saw that Roger too was moved, but she dared not look at him.

"What was your father?" he asked.

"He was an opera-dancer before the Revolution," said she, with an air of perfect simplicity, "and my mother sang in the chorus. My father, who was leader of the figures on the stage, happened to be present at the siege of the Bastille. He was recognized by some of the assailants, who asked him wether he could not lead a real attack, since he was used to leading such enterprises on the boards. My father was brave; he accepted the post, led the insurgents, and was rewarded by the nomination to the rank of captain in the army of Sambre-et-Meuse, where he distinguished himself so far as to rise rapidly to be a colonel. But at Lutzen he was so badly wounded that, after a year's sufferings, he died in Paris.—The Bourbons returned; my mother could obtain no pension, and we fell into such abject misery that we were compelled to work for our living. For some time past she has been ailing, poor dear, and I have never known her so little resigned; she complains a good deal, and, indeed, I cannot wonder, for she has known the pleasures of an easy life. For my part, I cannot pine for delights I have never known, I have but one thing to wish for."

"And that is?" said Roger eagerly, as if roused from a dream.

"That women may long continue to wear embroidered net dresses, so that I may never lack work."

The frankness of this confession interested the young man, who looked with less hostile eyes on Madame Crochard as she slowly made her way back to them.

"Well, children, have you had a long talk?" said she, with a half-laughing, half-indulgent air. "When I think, Monsieur Roger, that the 'little Corporal' has sat where you are sitting," she went on after a pause. "Poor man! how my husband worshiped him! Ah! Crochard did well to die, for he could not have borne to think of him where *they* have sent him!"

Roger put his finger to his lips, and the good woman went on very gravely, with a shake of her head:

"All right, mouth shut and tongue still! But," added she, unhooking a bit of her bodice, and showing a ribbon and cross tied round her neck by a piece of black ribbon, "they shall never hinder me from wearing what *he* gave to my poor Crochard, and I will have it buried with me."

On hearing this speech, which at that time was regarded as seditious, Roger interrupted the old lady by rising suddenly, and they returned to the village through the park walks. The young man left them for a few minutes while he went to order a meal at the best eating-house in Taverny; then, returning to fetch them, he led the way through the alleys cut in the forest.

The dinner was cheerful. Roger was no longer the melancholy shade that was wont to pass along the Rue du Tourniquet; he was not the "Black Gentleman," but rather a confiding young man ready to take life as it came, like the two hard-working women who, on the morrow, might lack bread; he seemed alive to all the joys of youth, his smile was quite affectionate and childlike.

When, at five o'clock, this happy meal was ended with a few glasses of champagne, Roger was the first to propose that they should join the village ball under the chestnuts, where he and Caroline danced together. Their hands met with sympathetic pressure, their hearts beat with the same hopes; and under the blue sky and the slanting, rosy beams of sunset, their eyes sparkled with fires which, to them, made the glory of the heavens pale. How strange is the power of an idea, of a desire! To these two nothing seemed impossible. In such magic moments, when enjoyment sheds its reflections on the future, the soul foresees nothing but happiness. This sweet day had created memories for these two to which nothing could be compared in all their past existence. Would the source prove to be more beautiful than the river, the desire more enchanting than its gratification, the thing hoped for more delightful than the thing possessed?

"So the day is already at an end!" On hearing this exclamation from her unknown friend when the dance was over,

Caroline looked at him compassionately, as his face assumed once more a faint shade of sadness.

"Why should you not be as happy in Paris as you are here?" she asked. "Is happiness to be found only at Saint-Leu? It seems to me that I can henceforth never be unhappy anywhere."

Roger was struck by these words, spoken with the glad unrestraint that always carries a woman further than she intended, just as prudery often lends her greater cruelty than she feels. For the first time since that glance, which had, in a way, been the beginning of their friendship, Caroline and Roger had the same idea; though they did not express it, they felt it at the same instant, as a result of a common impression like that of a comforting fire cheering both under the frost of winter; then, as if frightened by each other's silence, they made their way to the spot where the carriage was waiting. But before getting into it, they playfully took hands and ran together down the dark avenue in front of Madame Crochard. When they could no longer see the white net cap, which showed as a speck through the leaves where the old woman was—"Caroline!" said Roger in a tremulous voice, and with a beating heart.

The girl was startled, and drew back a few steps, understanding the invitation this question conveyed; however, she held out her hand, which was passionately kissed, but which she hastily withdrew, for by standing on tiptoe she could see her mother.

Madame Crochard affected blindness, as if, with a reminiscence of her old parts, she was only required to figure as a supernumerary.

The adventures of these two young people were not continued in the Rue du Tourniquet. To see Roger and Caroline once more, we must leap into the heart of modern Paris, where, in some of the newly-built houses, there are apartments that seem made on purpose for newly-married couples to spend their honeymoon in. There the paper and paint are as fresh

as the bride and bridegroom, and the decorations are in blossom like their love; everything is in harmony with youthful notions and ardent wishes.

Half-way down the Rue Taitbout, in a house whose stone walls were still white, where the columns of the hall and the doorway were as yet spotless, and the inner walls shone with the neat painting which our recent intimacy with English ways had brought into fashion, there was, on the second floor, a small set of rooms fitted by the architect as though he had known what their use would be. A simple airy ante-room, with a stucco dado, formed an entrance into a drawing-room and dining-room. Out of the drawing-room opened a pretty bedroom, with a bathroom beyond. Every chimney-shelf had over it a fine mirror elegantly framed. The doors were crowded with arabesques in good taste, and the cornices were in the best style. Any amateur would have discerned there the sense of distinction and decorative fitness which mark the work of modern French architects.

For above a month Caroline had been at home in this apartment, furnished by an upholsterer who submitted to an artist's guidance. A short description of the principal room will suffice to give an idea of the wonders it offered to Caroline's delighted eyes when Roger installed her there. Hangings of gray stuff trimmed with green silk adorned the walls of her bedroom; the seats, covered with light-colored woolen sateen, were of easy and comfortable shapes, and in the latest fashion; a chest of drawers of some simple wood, inlaid with lines of a darker hue, contained the treasures of the toilet; a writing-table to match served for inditing love-letters on scented paper; the bed, with antique draperies, could not fail to suggest thoughts of love by its soft hangings of elegant muslin; the window-curtains, of drab silk with green fringe, were always half drawn to subdue the light; a bronze clock represented Love crowning Psyche; and a carpet of Gothic design on a red ground set off the other accessories of this delightful retreat. There was a small dressing-table in front of a long glass, and here the ex-needlewoman sat, out of patience with Plaisir, the famous hairdresser.

"Do you think you will have done to-day?" said she.

"Your hair is so long and so thick, madame," replied Plaisir.

Caroline could not help smiling. The man's flattery had no doubt revived in her mind the memory of the passionate praises lavished by her lover on the beauty of her hair, which he delighted in.

The hairdresser having done, a waiting-maid came and held counsel with her as to the dress in which Roger would like best to see her. It was in the beginning of September 1816, and the weather was cold; she chose a green *grenadine* trimmed with chinchilla. As soon as she was dressed, Caroline flew into the drawing-room and opened a window, out of which she stepped on to the elegant balcony, that adorned the front of the house; there she stood, with her arms crossed, in a charming attitude, not to show herself to the admiration of the passers-by and see them turn to gaze at her, but to be able to look out on the Boulevard at the bottom of the Rue Taitbout. This side view, really very comparable to the peephole made by actors in the drop-scene of a theatre, enabled her to catch a glimpse of numbers of elegant carriages, and a crowd of persons, swept past with the rapidity of *Ombres Chinoises*. Not knowing whether Roger would arrive in a carriage or on foot, the needlewoman from the Rue du Tourniquet looked by turns at the foot-passengers, and at the tilburies—light cabs introduced into Paris by the English.

Expressions of refractoriness and of love passed by turns over her youthful face when, after waiting for a quarter of an hour, neither her keen eye nor her heart had announced the arrival of him whom she knew to be due. What disdain, what indifference were shown in her beautiful features for all the other creatures who were bustling like ants below her feet. Her gray eyes, sparkling with fun, now positively flamed. Given over to her passion, she avoided admiration with as much care as the proudest devote to encouraging it when they drive about Paris, certainly feeling no care as to whether her fair countenance leaning over the balcony, or her

little foot between the bars, and the picture of her bright eyes and delicious turned-up nose would be effaced or no from the minds of the passers-by who admired them; she saw but one face, and had but one idea. When the spotted head of a certain bay horse happened to cross the narrow strip between the two rows of houses, Caroline gave a little shiver and stood on tiptoe in hope of recognizing the white traces and the color of the tilbury. It was he!

Roger turned the corner of the street, saw the balcony, whipped the horse, which came up at a gallop, and stopped at the bronze-green door that he knew as well as his master did. The door of the apartment was opened at once by the maid, who had heard her mistress' exclamation of delight. Roger rushed up to the drawing-room, clasped Caroline in his arms, and embraced her with the effusive feeling natural when two beings who love each other rarely meet. He led her, or rather they went by a common impulse, their arms about each other, into the quiet and fragrant bedroom; a settee stood ready for them to sit by the fire, and for a moment they looked at each other in silence, expressing their happiness only by their clasped hands, and communicating their thoughts in a fond gaze.

"Yes, it is he!" she said at last. "Yes, it is you. Do you know, I have not seen you for three long days, an age!—But what is the matter? You are unhappy."

"My poor Caroline——"

"There, you see! 'poor Caroline'——"

"No, no, do not laugh, my darling; we cannot go to the Feydeau Theatre together this evening."

Caroline put on a little pout, but it vanished immediately.

"How absurd I am! How can I think of going to the play when I see you? Is not the sight of you the only spectacle I care for?" she cried, pushing her fingers through Roger's hair.

"I am obliged to go to the Attorney-General's. We have a knotty case in hand. He met me in the great hall at the Palais; and as I am to plead, he asked me to dine with him.

But, my dearest, you can go to the theatre with your mother, and I will join you if the meeting breaks up early."

"To the theatre without you!" cried she in a tone of amazement; "enjoy any pleasure you do not share! O my Roger! you do not deserve a kiss," she added, throwing her arms round his neck with an artless and impassioned impulse.

"Caroline, I must go home and dress. The Marais is some way off, and I still have some business to finish."

"Take care what you are saying, monsieur," said she, interrupting him. "My mother says that when a man begins to talk about his busines, he is ceasing to love."

"Caroline! Am I not here? Have I not stolen this hour from my pitiless——"

"Hush!" said she, laying a finger on his mouth. "Don't you see that I am in jest."

They had now come back to the drawing-room, and Roger's eye fell on an object brought home that morning by the cabinetmaker. Caroline's old rosewood embroidery-frame, by which she and her mother had earned their bread when they lived in the Rue du Tourniquet-Saint-Jean, had been refitted and polished, and a net dress, of elaborate design, was already stretched upon it.

"Well, then, my dear, I shall do some work this evening. As I stitch, I shall fancy myself gone back to those early days when you used to pass by me without a word, but not without a glance; the days when the remembrance of your look kept me awake all night. O my dear old frame—the best piece of furniture in my room, though you did not give it me!—You cannot think," said she, seating herself on Roger's knees; for he, overcome by irresistible feelings, had dropped into a chair. "Listen.—All I can earn by my work I mean to give to the poor. You have made me rich. How I love that pretty home at Bellefeuille, less because of what it is than because you gave it me! But tell me, Roger, I should like to call myself Caroline de Bellefeuille—can I? You must know: is it legal or permissible?

As she saw a little affirmative grimace—for Roger hated

the name of Crochard—Caroline jumped for glee, and clapped her hands.

"I feel," said she, "as if I should more especially belong to you. Usually a woman gives up her own name and takes her husband's——" An idea forced itself upon her and made her blush. She took Roger's hand and led him to the open piano.—"Listen," said she, "I can play my sonata now like an angel!" and her fingers were already running over the ivory keys, when she felt herself seized round the waist.

"Caroline, I ought to be far from hence!"

"You insist on going? Well, go," said she, with a pretty pout, but she smiled as she looked at the clock and exclaimed joyfully, "At any rate, I have detained you a quarter of an hour!"

"Good-bye, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille," said he, with the gentle irony of love.

She kissed him and saw her lover to the door; when the sound of his steps had died away on the stairs she ran out on to the balcony to see him get into the tilbury, to see him gather up the reins, to catch a parting look, hear the crack of his whip and the sound of his wheels on the stones, watch the handsome horse, the master's hat, the tiger's gold lace, and at last to stand gazing long after the dark corner of the street had eclipsed this vision.

Five years after Mademoiselle Caroline de Bellefeuille had taken up her abode in the pretty house in the Rue Taitbout, we again look in on one of those home-scenes which tighten the bonds of affection between two persons who truly love. In the middle of the blue drawing-room, in front of the window opening to the balcony, a little boy of four was making a tremendous noise as he whipped the rocking-horse, whose two curved supports for the legs did not move fast enough to please him; his pretty face, framed in fair curls that fell over his white collar, smiled up like a cherub's at his mother when she said to him from the depths of an easy-chair, "Not so much noise, Charles; you will wake your little sister."

The inquisitive boy suddenly got off his horse, and treading on tiptoe as if he were afraid of the sound of his feet on the carpet, came up with one finger between his little teeth, and standing in one of those childish attitudes that are so graceful because they are so perfectly natural, raised the muslin veil that hid the rosy face of a little girl sleeping on her mother's knee.

"Is Eugénie asleep, then?" said he, quite astonished. "Why is she asleep when we are awake?" he added, looking up with large, liquid black eyes.

"That only God can know," replied Caroline with a smile.

The mother and boy gazed at the infant, only that morning baptized.

Caroline, now about four-and-twenty, showed the ripe beauty which had expanded under the influence of cloudless happiness and constant enjoyment. In her the Woman was complete.

Delighted to obey her dear Roger's every wish, she had acquired the accomplishments she had lacked; she played the piano fairly well, and sang sweetly. Ignorant of the customs of a world that would have treated her as an outcast, and which she would not have cared for even if it had welcomed her—for a happy woman does not care for the world—she had not caught the elegance of manner or learned the art of conversation, abounding in words and devoid of ideas, which is current in fashionable drawing-rooms; on the other hand, she worked hard to gain the knowledge indispensable to a mother whose chief ambition is to bring up her children well. Never to lose sight of her boy, to give him from the cradle that training of every minute which impresses on the young a love of all that is good and beautiful, to shelter him from every evil influence and fulfil both the painful duties of a nurse and the tender offices of a mother,—these were her chief pleasures.

The coy and gentle being had from the first day so fully resigned herself never to step beyond the enchanted sphere where she found all her happiness, that, after six years of

the tenderest intimacy, she still knew her lover only by the name of Roger. A print of the picture of Psyche lighting her lamp to gaze on Love in spite of his prohibition, hung in her room, and constantly reminded her of the conditions of her happiness. Through all these six years her humble pleasures had never importuned Roger by a single indiscreet ambition, and his heart was a treasure-house of kindness. Never had she longed for diamonds or fine clothes, and had again and again refused the luxury of a carriage which he had offered her. To look out from her balcony for Roger's cab, to go with him to the play or make excursions with him, on fine days in the environs of Paris, to long for him, to see him, and then to long again,—these made up the history of her life, poor in incidents but rich in happiness.

As she rocked the infant, now a few months old, on her knee, singing the while, she allowed herself to recall the memories of the past. She lingered more especially on the months of September, when Roger was accustomed to take her to Bellefeuille and spend the delightful days which seem to combine the charms of every season. Nature is equally prodigal of flowers and fruit, the evenings are mild, the mornings bright, and a blaze of summer often returns after a spell of autumn gloom. During the early days of their love, Caroline had ascribed the even mind and gentle temper, of which Roger gave her so many proofs, to the rarity of their always longed-for meetings, and to their mode of life, which did not compel them to be constantly together, as a husband and wife must be. But now she could remember with rapture that, tortured by foolish fears, she had watched him with trembling during their first stay on this little estate in the Gatinais. Vain suspiciousness of love! Each of these months of happiness had passed like a dream in the midst of joys which never rang false. She had always seen that kind creature with a tender smile on his lips, a smile that seemed to mirror her own.

As she called up these vivid pictures, her eyes filled with tears; she thought she could not love him enough, and was

tempted to regard her ambiguous position as a sort of tax levied by Fate on her love. Finally, invincible curiosity led her to wonder for the thousandth time what events they could be that led so tender a heart as Roger's to find his pleasure in clandestine and illicit happiness. She invented a thousand romances on purpose really to avoid recognizing the true reason, which she had long suspected but tried not to believe in. She rose, and carrying the baby in her arms, went into the dining-room to superintend the preparations for dinner.

It was the 6th of May 1822, the anniversary of the excursion to the Park of Saint-Leu, which had been the turning-point of her life; each year it had been marked by heartfelt rejoicing. Caroline chose the linen to be used, and arranged the dessert. Having attended with joy to these details, which touched Roger, she placed the infant in her pretty cot and went out on to the balcony, whence she presently saw the carriage which her friend, as he grew to riper years, now used instead of the smart tilbury of his youth. After submitting to the first fire of Caroline's embraces and the kisses of the little rogue who addressed him as papa, Roger went to the cradle, looked at his little sleeping daughter, kissed her forehead, and then took out of his pocket a document covered with black writing.

"Caroline," said he, "here is the marriage portion of Mademoiselle Eugénie de Bellefeuille."

The mother gratefully took the paper, a deed of gift of securities in the State funds.

"But why," said she, "have you given Eugénie three thousand francs a year, and Charles no more than fifteen hundred?"

"Charles, my love, will be a man," replied he. "Fifteen hundred francs are enough for him. With so much for certain, a man of courage is above poverty. And if by chance your son should turn out a nonentity, I do not wish him to be able to play the fool. If he is ambitious, this small in-

come will give him a taste for work.—Eugénie is a girl; she must have a little fortune."

The father then turned to play with his boy, whose effusive affection showed the independence and freedom in which he was brought up. No sort of shyness between the father and child interfered with the charm which rewards a parent for his devotion; and the cheerfulness of the little family was as sweet as it was genuine. In the evening a magic-lantern displayed its illusions and mysterious pictures on a white sheet to Charles' great surprise, and more than once the innocent child's heavenly rapture made Caroline and Roger laugh heartily.

Later, when the little boy was in bed, the baby woke and craved its limpid nourishment. By the light of a lamp, in the chimney corner, Roger enjoyed the scene of peace and comfort, and gave himself up to the happiness of contemplating the sweet picture of the child clinging to Caroline's white bosom as she sat, as fresh as a newly opened lily, while her hair fell in long brown curls that almost hid her neck. The lamplight enhanced the grace of the young mother, shedding over her, her dress, and the infant, the picturesque effects of strong light and shadow.

The calm and silent woman's face struck Roger as a thousand times sweeter than ever, and he gazed tenderly at the rosy, pouting lips from which no harsh word had ever been heard. The very same thought was legible in Caroline's eyes as she gave a sidelong look at Roger, either to enjoy the effect she was producing on him, or to see what the end of the evening was to be. He, understanding the meaning of this cunning glance, said with assumed regret, "I must be going. I have a serious case to be finished, and I am expected at home. Duty before all things—don't you think so, my darling?"

Caroline looked him in the face with an expression at once sad and sweet, with the resignation which does not, however, disguise the pangs of a sacrifice.

"Good-bye, then," said she. "Go, for if you stay an hour longer I cannot so lightly bear to set you free."

"My dearest," said he with a smile, "I have three days' holiday, and am supposed to be twenty leagues away from Paris."

A few days after this anniversary of the 6th of May, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille hurried off one morning to the Rue Saint-Louis, in the Marais, only hoping she might not arrive too late at a house where she commonly went once a week. An express messenger had just come to inform her that her mother, Madame Crochard, was sinking under a complication of disorders produced by constant catarrh and rheumatism.

While the hackney coach-driver was flogging up his horses at Caroline's urgent request, supported by the promise of a handsome present, the timid old women, who had been Madame Crochard's friends during her later years, had brought a priest into the neat and comfortable second-floor rooms occupied by the old widow. Madame Crochard's maid did not know that the pretty lady at whose house her mistress so often dined was her daughter, and she was one of the first to suggest the services of a confessor, in the hope that this priest might be at least as useful to herself as to the sick woman. Between two games of boston, or out walking in the Jardin Turc, the old beldames with whom the widow gossiped all day had succeeded in rousing in their friend's stony heart some scruples as to her former life, some visions of the future, some fears of hell, and some hopes of forgiveness if she should return in sincerity to a religious life. So on this solemn morning three ancient females had settled themselves in the drawing-room where Madame Crochard was "at home" every Tuesday. Each in turn left her armchair to go to the poor old woman's bedside and to sit with her, giving her the false hopes with which people delude the dying.

At the same time, when the end was drawing near, when the physician called in the day before would no longer answer for her life, the three dames took counsel together as to whether it would not be well to send word to Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. Françoise having been duly informed, it was de-

cided that a commissionaire should go to the Rue Taitbout to inform the young relation whose influence was so disquieting to the four women; still, they hoped that the Auvergnat would be too late in bringing back the person who so certainly held the first place in the widow Crochard's affections. The widow, evidently in the enjoyment of a thousand crowns a year, would not have been so fondly cherished by this feminine trio, but that neither of them, nor Françoise herself, knew of her having any heir. The wealth enjoyed by Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille, whom Madame Crochard, in obedience to the traditions of the older opera, never allowed herself to speak of by the affectionate name of daughter, almost justified the four women in their scheme of dividing among themselves the old woman's "pickings."

Presently the one of these three sibyls who kept guard over the sick woman came shaking her head at the other anxious two, and said:

"It is time we should be sending for the Abbé Fontanon. In another two hours she will neither have the wit nor the strength to write a line."

Thereupon the toothless old cook went off, and returned with a man wearing a black gown. A low forehead showed a small mind in this priest, whose features were mean; his flabby, fat cheeks and double chin betrayed the easy-going egotist; his powdered hair gave him a pleasant look, till he raised his small, brown eyes, prominent under a flat forehead, and not unworthy to glitter under the brows of a Tartar.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Françoise, "I thank you for all your advice; but believe me, I have taken the greatest care of the dear soul."

But the servant, with her dragging step and woe-begone look, was silent when she saw that the door of the apartment was open, and that the most insinuating of the three dowagers was standing on the landing to be the first to speak with the confessor. When the priest had politely faced the honeyed and bigoted broadside of words fired off from the widow's three friends, he went into the sickroom to sit by Madame Crochard.

Decency, and some sense of reserve, compelled the three women and old Françoise to remain in the sitting-room, and to make such grimaces of grief as are possible in perfection only to such wrinkled faces.

"Oh, is it not ill-luck!" cried Françoise, heaving a sigh. "This is the fourth mistress I have buried. The first left me a hundred francs a year, the second a sum of fifty crowns, and the third a thousand crowns down. After thirty years' service, that is all I have to call my own."

The woman took advantage of her freedom to come and go, to slip into a cupboard, whence she could hear the priest.

"I see with pleasure, daughter," said Fontanon, "that you have pious sentiments; you have a sacred relic round your neck."

Madame Crochard, with a feeble vagueness which seemed to show that she had not all her wits about her, pulled out the Imperial Cross of the Legion of Honor. The priest started back at seeing the Emperor's head; he went up to the penitent again, and she spoke to him, but in such a low tone that for some minutes Françoise could hear nothing.

"Woe upon me!" cried the old woman suddenly. "Do not desert me. What, Monsieur l'Abbé, do you think I shall be called to account for my daughter's soul?"

The Abbé spoke too low, and the partition was too thick for Françoise to hear the reply.

"Alas!" sobbed the woman, "the wretch has left me nothing that I can bequeath. When he robbed me of my dear Caroline, he parted us, and only allowed me three thousand francs a year, of which the capital belongs to my daughter."

"Madame has a daughter, and nothing to live on but an annuity," shrieked Françoise, bursting into the drawing-room.

The three old crones looked at each other in dismay. One of them, whose nose and chin nearly met with an expresion that betrayed a superior type of hypocrisy and cunning, winked her eyes; and as soon as Françoise's back was turned, she gave her friends a nod, as much as to say, "That slut is

too knowing by half; her name has figured in three wills already."

So the three old dames sat on.

However, the Abbé presently came out, and at a word from him the witches scuttered down the stairs at his heels, leaving Françoise alone with her mistress. Madame Crochard, whose sufferings increased in severity, rang, but in vain, for this woman, who only called out, "Coming, coming—in a minute!" The doors of cupboards and wardrobes were slamming as though Françoise were hunting high and low for a lost lottery ticket.

Just as this crisis was at a climax, Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille came to stand by her mother's bed, lavishing tender words on her.

"O my dear mother, how criminal I have been! You are ill, and I did not know it; my heart did not warn me. However, here I am——"

"Caroline——"

"What is it?"

"They fetched a priest——"

"But send for a doctor, bless me!" cried Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille. "Françoise, a doctor! How is it that those ladies never sent for a doctor?"

"They sent for a priest——" repeated the old woman with a gasp.

"She is so ill—and no soothing draught, nothing on her table!"

The mother made a vague sign, which Caroline's watchful eye understood, for she was silent to let her mother speak.

"They brought a priest—to hear my confession, as they said. —Beware, Caroline!" cried the old woman with an effort, "the priest made me tell him your benefactor's name."

"But who can have told you, poor mother?"

The old woman died, trying to look knowingly cunning. If Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille had noted her mother's face, she might have seen what no one ever will see—Death laughing.

To enter into the interests that lay beneath this introduction to my tale, we must for a moment forget the actors in it, and look back at certain previous incidents, of which the last was closely concerned with the death of Madame Crochard. The two parts will then form a whole—a story which, by a law peculiar to life in Paris, was made up of two distinct sets of actions.

Toward the close of the month of November 1805, a young barrister, aged about six-and-twenty, was going down the stairs of the hotel where the High Chancellor of the Empire resided, at about three o'clock one morning. Having reached the courtyard in full evening dress, under a keen frost, he could not help giving vent to an exclamation of dismay—qualified, however, by the spirit which rarely deserts a Frenchman—at seeing no hackney coach waiting outside the gates, and hearing no noises such as arise from the wooden shoes or harsh voices of the hackney-coachmen of Paris. The occasional pawing of the horses of the Chief Justice's carriage—the young man having left him still playing *bouillote* with Cambacérès—alone rang out in the paved court, which was scarcely lighted by the carriage lamps. Suddenly the young lawyer felt a friendly hand on his shoulder, and turning round, found himself face to face with the Judge, to whom he bowed. As the footman let down the steps of his carriage, the old gentleman, who had served the Convention, suspected the junior's dilemma.

"All cats are gray in the dark," said he good-humoredly. "The Chief Justice cannot compromise himself by putting a pleader in the right way! Especially," he went on, "when the pleader is the nephew of an old colleague, one of the lights of the grand Council of State which gave to France the Napoleonic Code."

At a gesture from the chief magistrate of France under the Empire, the foot-passenger got into the carriage.

"Where do you live?" asked the great man, before the footman who awaited his orders had closed the door.

"Quai des Augustins, monseigneur."

The horses started, and the young man found himself alone with the Minister, to whom he had vainly tried to speak before and after the sumptuous dinner given by Cambacérès; in fact, the great man had evidently avoided him throughout the evening.

"Well, Monsieur *de* Granville, you are on the high road!"

"So long as I sit by your Excellency's side——"

"Nay, I am not jesting," said the Minister. "You were called two years since, and your defence in the case of Simeuse and Hauteserre has raised you high in your profession."

"I had supposed that my interest in those unfortunate émigrés had done me no good."

"You are still very young," said the great man gravely. "But the High Chancellor," he went on, after a pause, "was greatly pleased with you this evening. Get a judgeship in the lower courts; we want men. The nephew of a man in whom Cambacérès and I take great interest must not remain in the background for lack of encouragement. Your uncle helped us to tide over a very stormy season, and services of that kind are not to be forgotten." The Minister sat silent for a few minutes. "Before long," he went on, "I shall have three vacancies open in the Lower Courts and in the Imperial Court in Paris. Come to see me, and take the place you prefer. Till then work hard, but do not be seen at my receptions. In the first place, I am overwhelmed with work; and besides that, your rivals may suspect your purpose and do you harm with the patron. Cambacérès and I, by not speaking a word to you this evening, have averted the accusation of favoritism."

As the great man ceased speaking, the carriage drew up on the Quai des Augustins; the young lawyer thanked his generous patron for the two lifts he had conferred on him, and then knocked at his door pretty loudly, for the bitter wind blew cold about his calves. At last the old lodgekeeper pulled up the latch; and as the young man passed his window, called out in a hoarse voice, "Monsieur Granville, here is a letter for you."

The young man took the letter, and in spite of the cold, tried to identify the writing by the gleam of a dull lamp fast dying out. "From my father!" he exclaimed, as he took his bedroom candle, which the porter at last had lighted. And he ran up to his room to read the following epistle:—

"Set off by the next mail; and if you can get here soon enough, your fortune is made. Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems has lost her sister; she is now an only child; and, as we know, she does not hate you. Madame Bontems can now leave her about forty thousand francs a year, besides whatever she may give her when she marries. I have prepared the way.

"Our friends will wonder to see a family of old nobility allying itself to the Bontems; old Bontems was a red republican of the deepest dye, owning large quantities of the nationalized land, that he bought for a mere song. But he held nothing but convent lands, and the monks will not come back; and then, as you have already so far derogated as to become a lawyer, I cannot see why we should shrink from a further concession to the prevalent ideas. The girl will have three hundred thousand francs; I can give you a hundred thousand; your mother's property must be worth fifty thousand crowns, more or less; so if you choose to take a judgeship, my dear son, you are quite in a position to become a senator as much as any other man. My brother-in-law the Councillor of State will not indeed lend you a helping-hand; still, as he is not married, his property will some day be yours, and if you are not senator by your own efforts, you will get it through him. Then you will be perched high enough to look on at events. Farewell. Yours affectionately."

So young Granville went to bed full of schemes, each fairer than the last. Under the powerful protection of the High Chancellor, the Chief Justice, and his mother's brother—one of the originators of the Code—he was about to make a start in a coveted position before the highest court of the Empire,

and he already saw himself a member of the bench whence Napoleon selected the chief functionaries of the realm. He could also promise himself a fortune handsome enough to keep up his rank, for which the slender income of five thousand francs from an estate left him by his mother would be quite insufficient.

To crown his ambitious dreams with a vision of happiness, he called up the guileless face of Mademoiselle Angélique Bontems, the companion of his childhood. Until he came to boyhood his father and mother had made no objection to his intimacy with their neighbor's pretty little daughter; but when, during his brief holiday visits to Bayeux, his parents, who prided themselves on their good birth, saw what friends the young people were, they forbade his ever thinking of her. Thus for ten years past Granville had only had occasional glimpses of the girl, whom he till sometimes thought of as "his little wife." And in those brief moments when they met free from the active watchfulness of their families, they had scarcely exchanged a few vague civilities at the church door or in the street. Their happiest days had been those when, brought together by one of those country festivities known in Normandy as *Assemblées,* they could steal a glance at each other from afar.

In the course of the last vacation Granville had twice seen Angélique, and her downcast eyes and drooping attitude had led him to suppose that she was crushed by some unknown tyranny.

He was off by seven next morning to the coach office in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, and was so lucky as to find a vacant seat in the diligence then starting for Caen.

It was not without deep emotion that the young lawyer saw once more the spires of the cathedral at Bayeux. As yet no hope of his life had been cheated, and his heart swelled with the generous feelings that expand in the youthful soul.

After the too lengthy feast of welcome prepared by his father, who awaited him with some friends, the impatient youth was conducted to a house, long familiar to him, stand-

ing in the Rue Teinture. His heart beat high when his father—still known in the town of Bayeux as the Comte de Granville—knocked loudly at a carriage gate off which the green paint was dropping in scales. It was about four in the afternoon. A young maid-servant, in a cotton cap, dropped a short courtesy to the two gentlemen, and said that the ladies would soon be home from vespers.

The Count and his son were shown into a low room used as a drawing-room, but more like a convent parlor. Polished panels of dark walnut made it gloomy enough, and around it some old-fashioned chairs covered with worsted work and stiff armchairs were symmetrically arranged. The stone chimney-shelf had no ornament but a discolored mirror, and on each side of it were the twisted branches of a pair of candle-brackets, such as were made at the time of the Peace of Utrecht. Against a panel opposite, young Granville saw an enormous crucifix of ebony and ivory surrounded by a wreath of box that had been blessed. Though there were three windows to the room, looking out on a country-town garden, laid out in formal square beds edged with box, the room was so dark that it was difficult to discern, on the wall opposite the windows, three pictures of sacred subjects painted by a skilled hand, and purchased, no doubt, during the Revolution by old Bontems, who, as governor of the district, had never neglected his opportunities. From the carefully polished floor to the green checked holland curtains everything shone with conventual cleanliness.

The young man's heart felt an involuntary chill in this silent retreat where Angélique dwelt. The habit of frequenting the glittering Paris drawing-rooms, and the constant whirl of society, had effaced from his memory the dull and peaceful surroundings of a country life, and the contrast was so startling as to give him a sort of internal shiver. To have just left a party at the house of Cambacérès, where life was so large, where minds could expand, where the splendor of the Imperial Court was so vividly reflected, and to be dropped suddenly into a sphere of squalidly narrow ideas—was it not

like a leap from Italy into Greenland?—"Living here is not life!" said he to himself, as he looked round the Methodistical room. The old Count, seeing his son's dismay, went up to him, and taking his hand, led him to a window, where there was still a gleam of daylight, and while the maid was lighting the yellow tapers in the candle branches he tried to clear away the clouds that the dreary place had brought to his brow.

"Listen, my boy," said he. "Old Bontems' widow is a frenzied bigot. 'When the devil is old——' you know! I see that the place goes against the grain. Well, this is the whole truth; the old woman is priest-ridden; they have persuaded her that it was high time to make sure of heaven, and the better to secure Saint Peter and his keys she pays beforehand. She goes to Mass every day, attends every service, takes the Communion every Sunday God has made, and amuses herself by restoring chapels. She has given so many ornaments, and albs, and chasubles, she has crowned the canopy with so many feathers, that on the occasion of the last Corpus Christi procession as great a crowd came together as to see a man hanged, just to stare at the priests in their splendid dresses and all the vessels regilt. This house too is a sort of Holy Land. It was I who hindered her from giving those three pictures to the Church—a Domenichino, a Correggio, and an Andrea del Sarto—worth a good deal of money."

"But Angélique?" asked the young man.

"If you do not marry her, Angélique is done for," said the Count. "Our holy apostles counsel her to live a virgin martyr. I have had the utmost difficulty in stirring up her little heart, since she has been the only child, by talking to her of you; but, as you will easily understand, as soon as she is married you will carry her off to Paris. There, festivities, married life, the theatres, and the rush of Parisian society, will soon make her forget confessionals, and fasting, and hair shirts, and Masses, which are the exclusive nourishment of such creatures."

"But the fifty thousand francs a year derived from Church property? Will not all that return——"

"That is the point!" exclaimed the Count, with a cunning glance. "In consideration of this marriage—for Madame Bontems' vanity is not a little flattered by the notion of grafting the Bontems on to the genealogical tree of the Granvilles—the aforenamed mother agrees to settle her fortune absolutely on the girl, reserving only a life-interest. The priesthood, therefore, are set against the marriage; but I have had the banns published, everything is ready, and in a week you will be out of the clutches of the mother and her Abbés. You will have the prettiest girl in Bayeux, a good little soul who will give you no trouble, because she has sound principles. She has been mortified, as they say in their jargon, by fasting and prayer——and," he added in a low voice, "by her mother."

A modest tap at the door silenced the Count, who expected to see the two ladies appear. A little page came in, evidently in a great hurry; but, abashed by the presence of the two gentlemen, he beckoned to a housekeeper, who followed him. Dressed in a blue cloth jacket with short tails, and blue-and-white striped trousers, his hair cut short all round, the boy's expression was that of a chorister, so strongly was it stamped with the compulsory propriety that marks every member of a bigoted household.

"Mademoiselle Gatienne," said he, "do you know where the books are for the offices of the Virgin? The ladies of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart are going in procession this evening round the church."

Gatienne went in search of the books.

"Will they go on much longer, my little man?" asked the Count.

"Oh, half an hour at most."

"Let us go to look on," said the father to his son. "There will be some pretty women there, and a visit to the Cathedral can do us no harm."

The young lawyer followed him with a doubtful expression.

"What is the matter?" said the Count.

"The matter, father, is that I am sure I am right."

"But you have said nothing."

"No; but I have been thinking that you have still ten thousand francs a year left of your original fortune. You will leave them to me—as long a time hence as possible, I hope. But if you are ready to give me a hundred thousand francs to make a foolish match, you will surely allow me to ask you for only fifty thousand to save me from such a misfortune, and enjoy as a bachelor a fortune equal to what your Mademoiselle Bontems would bring me."

"Are you crazy?"

"No, father. These are the facts. The Chief Justice promised me yesterday that I should have a seat on the Bench. Fifty thousand francs added to what I have, and to the pay of my appointment, will give me an income of twelve thousand francs a year. And I then shall most certainly have a chance of marrying a fortune, better than this alliance, which will be poor in happiness if rich in goods."

"It is very clear," said his father, "that you were not brought up under the old *régime*. Does a man of our rank ever allow his wife to be in his way?"

"But, my dear father, in these days marriage is——"

"Bless me!" cried the Count, interrupting his son, "then what my old *émigré* friends tell me is true, I suppose. The Revolution has left us habits devoid of pleasure, and has infected all the young men with vulgar principles. You, like my Jacobin brother-in-law, will harangue me, I suppose, on the Nation, Public Morals, and Disinterestedness!—Good Heavens! But for the Emperor's sisters, where should we be?"

The still hale old man, whom the peasants on the estate persisted in calling the Signeur de Granville, ended his speech as they entered the Cathedral porch. In spite of the sanctity of the place, and even as he dipped his fingers in the holy water, he hummed an air from the opera of *Rose et Colas,* and then led the way down the side aisles, stopping by each pillar to survey the rows of heads, all in lines like ranks of soldiers on parade.

The special service of the Sacred Heart was about to begin. The ladies affiliated to that congregation were in front near the choir, so the Count and his son made their way to that part of the nave, and stood leaning against one of the columns where there was least light, whence they could command a view of this mass of faces, looking like a meadow full of flowers. Suddenly, close to young Granville, a voice, sweeter than it seemed possible to ascribe to a human being, broke into song, like the first nightingale when winter is past. Though it mingled with the voices of a thousand other women and the notes of the organ, that voice stirred his nerves as though they vibrated to the too full and too piercing sounds of a harmonium. The Parisian turned round, and, seeing a young figure, though, the head being bent, her face was entirely concealed by a large white bonnet, concluded that the voice was hers. He fancied that he recognized Angélique in spite of a brown merino pelisse that wrapped her, and he nudged his father's elbow.

"Yes, there she is," said the Count, after looking where his son pointed, and then, by an expressive glance, he directed his attention to the pale face of an elderly woman who had already detected the strangers, though her false eyes, deep set in dark circles, did not seem to have strayed from the prayer-book she held.

Angélique raised her face, gazing at the altar as if to inhale the heavy scent of the incense that came wafted in clouds over the two women. And then, in the doubtful light that the tapers shed down the nave, with that of a central lamp and of some lights round the pillars, the young man beheld a face which shook his determination. A white watered-silk bonnet closely framed features of perfect regularity, the oval being completed by the satin ribbon tie that fastened it under her dimpled chin. Over her forehead, very sweet though low, hair of a pale gold color parted in two bands and fell over her cheeks, like the shadow of leaves on a flower. The arches of her eyebrows were drawn with the accuracy we admire in the best Chinese paintings. Her nose,

almost aquiline in profile, was exceptionally firmly cut, and her lips were like two rosy lines lovingly traced with a delicate brush. Her eyes, of a light blue, were expressive of innocence.

Though Granville discerned a sort of rigid reserve in this girlish face, he could ascribe it to the devotion in which Angélique was rapt. The solemn words of prayer, visible in the cold, came from between rows of pearls, like a fragrant mist, as it were. The young man involuntarily bent over her a little to breathe this diviner air. This movement attracted the girl's notice; her gaze, raised to the altar, was diverted to Granville, whom she could see but dimly in the gloom; but she recognized him as the companion of her youth, and a memory more vivid than prayer brought a supernatural glow to her face; she blushed. The young lawyer was thrilled with joy at seeing the hopes of another life overpowered by those of love, and the glory of the sanctuary eclipsed by earthly reminiscences; but his triumph was brief. Angélique dropped her veil, assumed a calm demeanor, and went on singing without letting her voice betray the least emotion.

Granville was a prey to one single wish, and every thought of prudence vanished. By the time the service was ended, his impatience was so great that he could not leave the ladies to go home alone, but came at once to make his bow to "his little wife." They bashfully greeted each other in the Cathedral porch in the presence of the congregation. Madame Bontems was tremulous with pride as she took the Comte de Granville's arm, though he, forced to offer it in the presence of all the world, was vexed enough with his son for his ill-advised impatience.

For about a fortnight, between the official announcement of the intended marriage of the Vicomte de Granville to Mademoiselle Bontems and the solemn day of the wedding, he came assiduously to visit his lady-love in the dismal drawing-room, to which he became accustomed. His long calls were devoted to watching Angélique's character; for

his prudence, happily, had made itself heard again the day after their first meeting. He always found her seated at a little table of some West Indian wood, and engaged in marking the linen of her trousseau. Angélique never spoke first on the subject of religion. If the young lawyer amused himself with fingering the handsome rosary that she kept in a little green velvet bag, if he laughed as he looked at a relic such as usually is attached to this means of grace, Angélique would gently take the rosary out of his hands and replace it in the bag without a word, putting it away at once. When, now and then, Granville was so bold as to make mischievous remarks as to certain religious practices, the pretty girl listened to him with the obstinate smile of assurance.

"You must either believe nothing, or believe everything the Church teaches," she would say. "Would you wish to have a woman without a religion as the mother of your children?—No.—What man may dare judge as between disbelievers and God? And how can I then blame what the Church allows?"

Angélique appeared to be animated by such fervent charity, the young man saw her look at him with such perfect conviction, that he sometimes felt tempted to embrace her religious views; her firm belief that she was in the only right road aroused doubts in his mind, which she tried to turn to account.

But then Granville committed the fatal blunder of mistaking the enchantment of desire for that of love. Angélique was so happy in reconciling the voice of her heart with that of duty, by giving way to a liking that had grown up with her from childhood, that the deluded man could not discern which of the two spoke the louder. Are not all young men ready to trust the promise of a pretty face and to infer beauty of soul from beauty of feature? An indefinable impulse leads them to believe that moral perfection must co-exist with physical perfection. If Angélique had not been at liberty to give vent to her sentiments, they would soon have dried up in her heart like a plant watered with some deadly acid. How should a lover be aware of bigotry so well hidden?

This was the course of young Granville's feelings during

that fortnight, devoured by him like a book of which the end is absorbing. Angélique, carefully watched by him, seemed the gentlest of creatures, and he even caught himself feeling grateful to Madame Bontems, who, by implanting so deeply the principles of religion, had in some degree inured her to meet the troubles of life.

On the day named for signing the inevitable contract, Madame Bontems made her son-in-law pledge himself solemnly to respect her daughter's religious practices, to allow her entire liberty of conscience, to permit her to go to communion, to church, to confession as often as she pleased, and never to control her choice of priestly advisers. At this critical moment Angélique looked at her future husband with such pure and innocent eyes, that Granville did not hesitate to give his word. A smile puckered the lips of the Abbé Fontanon, a pale man, who directed the consciences of this household. Mademoiselle Bontems, by a slight nod, seemed to promise that she would never take an unfair advantage of this freedom. As to the old Count, he gently whistled the tune of an old song, *Va-t-en voir s'ils viennent* ("Go and see if they are coming on!")

A few days after the wedding festivities, of which so much is thought in the provinces, Granville and his wife went to Paris, whither the young man was recalled by his appointment as public prosecutor to the Supreme Court of the Seine circuit.

When the young couple set out to find a residence, Angélique used the influence that the honeymoon gives to every wife in persuading her husband to take a large apartment in the ground-floor of a house at the corner of the Vieille Rue du Temple and the Rue Neuve Saint-François. Her chief reason for this choice was that the house was close to the Rue d'Orleans, where there was a church, and not far from a small chapel in the Rue Saint-Louis.

"A good housewife provides for everything," said her husband, laughing.

Angélique pointed out to him that this part of Paris, known as the Marais, was within easy reach of the Palais de Justice, and that the lawyers they knew lived in the neighborhood. A fairly large garden made the apartment particularly advantageous to a young couple; the children—if Heaven should send them any—could play in the open air; the courtyard was spacious, and there were good stables.

The lawyer wished to live in the Chaussée d'Antin, where everything is fresh and bright, where the fashions may be seen while still new, where a well-dressed crowd throngs the Boulevards, and the distance is less to the theatres or places of amusement; but he was obliged to give way to the coaxing ways of a young wife, who asked this as his first favor; so, to please her, he settled in the Marais. Granville's duties required him to work hard—all the more, because they were new to him—so he devoted himself in the first place to furnishing his private study and arranging his books. He was soon established in a room crammed with papers, and left the decoration of the house to his wife. He was all the better pleased to plunge Angélique into the bustle of buying furniture and fittings, the source of so much pleasure and of so many associations to most young women, because he was rather ashamed of depriving her of his company more often than the usages of early married life require. As soon as his work was fairly under way, he gladly allowed his wife to tempt him out of his study to consider the effect of furniture or hangings, which he had before only seen piecemeal or unfinished.

If the old adage is true that says a woman may be judged of from her front door, her rooms must express her mind with even greater fidelity. Madame de Granville had perhaps stamped the various things she had ordered with the seal of her own character; the young lawyer was certainly startled by the cold, arid solemnity that reigned in these rooms; he found nothing to charm his taste; everything was discordant, nothing gratified the eye. The rigid mannerism that prevailed in the sitting-room at Bayeux had invaded his home; the broad panels were hollowed in circles, and decorated with

those arabesques of which the long, monotonous mouldings are in such bad taste. Anxious to find excuses for his wife, the young husband began again, looking first at the long and lofty ante-room through which the apartment was entered. The color of the panels, as ordered by his wife, was too heavy, and the very dark green velvet used to cover the benches added to the gloom of this entrance—not, to be sure, an important room, but giving a first impression—just as we measure a man's intelligence by his first address. An ante-room is a kind of preface which announces what is to follow, but promises nothing.

The young husband wondered whether his wife could really have chosen the lamp of an antique pattern, which hung in the centre of this bare hall, the pavement of black and white marble, and the paper in imitation of blocks of stone, with green moss on them in places. A handsome, but not new, barometer hung on the middle of one of the walls, as if to accentuate the void. At the sight of it all, he looked round at his wife; he saw her so much pleased by the red braid binding to the cotton curtains, so satisfied with the barometer and the strictly decent statue that ornamented a large Gothic stove, that he had not the barbarous courage to overthrow such deep convictions. Instead of blaming his wife, Granville blamed himself, accusing himself of having failed in his duty of guiding the first steps in Paris of a girl brought up at Bayeux.

From this specimen, what might not be expected of the other rooms? What was to be looked for from a woman who took fright at the bare legs of a Caryatid, and who would not look at a chandelier or a candle-stick if she saw on it the nude outlines of an Egyptian bust? At this date the school of David was at the height of its glory; all the art of France bore the stamp of his correct design and his love of antique types, which indeed gave his pictures the character of colored sculpture. But none of these devices of Imperial luxury found civic rights under Madame de Granville's roof. The spacious, square drawing-room remained as it had been left from the time of Louis XV., in white and tarnished gold, lavishly

adorned by the architect with checkered lattice-work and the hideous garlands due to the uninventive designers of the time. Still, if harmony at least had prevailed, if the furniture of modern mahogany had but assumed the twisted forms of which Boucher's corrupt taste first set the fashion, Angélique's room would only have suggested the fantastic contrast of a young couple in the nineteenth century living as though they were in the eighteenth; but a number of details were in ridiculous discord. The consoles, the clocks, the candelabra, were decorated with the military trophies which the wars of the Empire commended to the affections of the Parisians; and the Greek helmets, the Roman crossed daggers, and the shields so dear to military enthusiasm that they were introduced on furniture of the most peaceful uses, had no fitness side by side with the delicate and profuse arabesques that delighted Madame de Pompadour.

Bigotry tends to an indescribably tiresome kind of humility which does not exclude pride. Whether from modesty or by choice, Madame de Granville seemed to have a horror of light and cheerful colors; perhaps, too, she imagined that brown and purple beseemed the dignity of a magistrate. How could a girl accustomed to an austere life have admitted the luxurious divans that may suggest evil thoughts, the elegant and tempting boudoirs where naughtiness may be imagined?

The poor husband was in despair. From the tone in which he approved, only seconding the praises she bestowed on herself, Angélique understood that nothing really pleased him; and she expressed so much regret at her want of success, that Granville, who was very much in love, regarded her disappointment as a proof of her affection instead of resentment for an offence to her self-conceit. After all, could he expect a girl just snatched from the humdrum of country notions, with no experience of the niceties and grace of Paris life, to know or do any better? Rather would he believe that his wife's choice had been overruled by the tradesmen than allow himself to own the truth. If he had been less in love, he would have understood that the dealers, always quick to discern their

customers' ideas, had blessed Heaven for sending them a tasteless little bigot, who would take their old-fashioned goods off their hands. So he comforted the pretty provincial.

"Happiness, dear Angélique, does not depend on a more or less elegant piece of furniture; it depends on the wife's sweetness, gentleness, and love."

"Why, it is my duty to love you," said Angélique mildly, "and I can have no more delightful duty to carry out."

Nature has implanted in the heart of woman so great a desire to please, so deep a craving for love, that, even in a youthful bigot, the ideas of salvation and a future existence must give way to the happiness of early married life. And, in fact, from the month of April, when they were married, till the beginning of winter, the husband and wife lived in perfect union. Love and hard work have the grace of making a man tolerably indifferent to external matters. Being obliged to spend half the day in court fighting for the gravest interests of men's lives or fortunes, Granville was less alive than another might have been to certain facts in his household.

If, on a Friday, he found none but Lenten fare, and by chance asked for a dish of meat without getting it, his wife, forbidden by the Gospel to tell a lie, could still, by such subterfuges as are permissible in the interests of religion, cloak what was premeditated purpose under some pretext of her own carelessness or the scarcity in the market. She would often exculpate herself at the expense of the cook, and even go so far as to scold him. At that time young lawyers did not, as they do now, keep the fasts of the Church, the four rogation seasons, and the vigils of festivals; so Granville was not at first aware of the regular recurrence of these Lenten meals, which his wife took care should be made dainty by the addition of teal, moor-hen, and fish-pies, that their amphibious meat or high seasoning might cheat his palate. Thus the young man unconsciously lived in strict orthodoxy, and worked out his salvation without knowing it.

On week-days he did not know whether his wife went to Mass or no. On Sundays, with very natural amiability, he

accompanied her to church to make up to her, as it were, for sometimes giving up vespers in favor of his company; he could not at first fully enter into the strictness of his wife's religious views. The theatres being impossible in summer by reason of the heat, Granville had not even the opportunity of the great success of a piece to give rise to the serious question of play-going. And, in short, at the early stage of an union to which a man has been led by a young girl's beauty, he can hardly be exacting as to his amusements. Youth is greedy rather than dainty, and possession has a charm in itself. How should he be keen to note coldness, dignity, and reserve in the woman to whom he ascribes the excitement he himself feels, and lends the glow of the fire that burns within him? He must have attained a certain conjugal calm before he discovers that a bigot sits waiting for love with her arms folded.

Granville, therefore, believed himself happy till a fatal event brought its influence to bear on his married life. In the month of November 1808 the Canon of Bayeux Cathedral, who had been the keeper of Madame Bontems' conscience and her daughter's, came to Paris, spurred by the ambition to be at the head of a church in the capital—a position which he regarded perhaps as the stepping-stone to a bishopric. On resuming his former control of this wandering lamb, he was horrified to find her already so much deteriorated by the air of Paris, and strove to reclaim her to his chilly fold. Frightened by the exhortations of this priest, a man of about eight-and-thirty, who brought with him, into the circle of the enlightened and tolerant Paris clergy, the bitter provincial catholicism and the inflexible bigotry which fetter timid souls with endless exactions, Madame de Granville did penance and returned from her Jansenist errors.

It would be tiresome to describe minutely all the circumstances which insensibly brought disaster on this household; it will be enough to relate the simple facts without giving them in strict order of time.

The first misunderstanding between the young couple was, however, a serious one.

When Granville took his wife into society she never declined solemn functions, such as dinners, concerts, or parties given by the Judges superior to her husband in the legal profession; but for a long time she constantly excused herself on the plea of a sick headache when they were invited to a ball. One day Granville, out of patience with these assumed indispositions, destroyed a note of invitation to a ball at the house of a Councillor of State, and gave his wife only a verbal invitation. Then, on the evening, her health being quite above suspicion, he took her to a magnificent entertainment.

"My dear," said he, on their return home, seeing her wear an offensive air of depression, "your position as a wife, the rank you hold in society, and the fortune you enjoy, impose on you certain duties of which no divine law can relieve you. Are you not your husband's pride? You are required to go to balls when I go, and to appear in a becoming manner."

"And what is there, my dear, so disastrous in my dress?"

"It is your manner, my dear. When a young man comes up to speak to you, you look so serious that a spiteful person might believe you doubtful of your own virtue. You seem to fear lest a smile should undo you. You really look as if you were asking forgiveness of God for the sins that may be committed around you. The world, my dearest, is not a convent.—But, as you have mentioned your dress, I may confess to you that it is no less a duty to conform to the customs and fashions of Society."

"Do you wish that I should display my shape like those indecent women who wear gowns so low that impudent eyes can stare at their bare shoulders and their——"

"There is a difference, my dear," said her husband, interrupting her, "between uncovering your whole bust and giving some grace to your dress. You wear three rows of net frills that cover your throat up to your chin. You look as if you had desired your dressmaker to destroy the graceful line of your shoulders and bosom with as much care as a coquette would devote to obtaining from hers a bodice that might emphasize her covered form. Your bust is wrapped in so

many folds, that every one was laughing at your affectation of prudery. You would be really grieved if I were to repeat the ill-natured remarks made on your appearance."

"Those who admire such obscenity will not have to bear the burthen if we sin," said the lady tartly.

"And you did not dance?" asked Granville.

"I shall never dance," she replied.

"If I tell you that you ought to dance!" said her husband sharply. "Yes, you ought to follow the fashions, to wear flowers in your hair, and diamonds. Remember, my dear, that rich people—and we are rich—are obliged to keep up luxury in the State. Is it not far better to encourage manufacturers than to distribute money in the form of alms through the medium of the clergy?"

"You talk as a statesman!" said Angélique.

"And you as a priest," he retorted.

The discussion was bitter. Madame de Granville's answers, though spoken very sweetly and in a voice as clear as a church bell, showed an obstinacy that betrayed priestly influence. When she appealed to the rights secured to her by Granville's promise, she added that her director specially forbade her going to balls; then her husband pointed out to her that the priest was overstepping the regulations of the Church.

This odious theological dispute was renewed with great violence and acerbity on both sides when Granville proposed to take his wife to the play. Finally, the lawyer, whose sole aim was to defeat the pernicious influence exerted over his wife by her old confessor, placed the question on such a footing that Madame de Granville, in a spirit of defiance, referred it by writing to the Court of Rome, asking in so many words whether a woman could wear low gowns and go to the play and to balls without compromising her salvation.

The reply of the venerable Pope Pius VII. came at once, strongly condemning the wife's recalcitrancy and blaming the priest. This letter, a chapter on conjugal duties, might have been dictated by the spirit of Fénelon, whose grace and tenderness pervaded every line.

"A wife is right to go wherever her husband may take her. Even if she sins by his command, she will not be ultimately held answerable." These two sentences of the Pope's homily only made Madame de Granville and her director accuse him of irreligion.

But before this letter had arrived, Granville had discovered the strict observance of fast days that his wife forced upon him, and gave his servants orders to serve him with meat every day in the year. However much annoyed his wife might be by these commands, Granville, who cared not a straw for such indulgence or abstinence, persisted with manly determination.

Is it not an offence to the weakest creature that can think at all to be compelled to do, by the will of another, anything that he would otherwise have done simply of his own accord? Of all forms of tyranny, the most odious is that which constantly robs the soul of the merit of its thoughts and deeds. It has to abdicate without having reigned. The word we are readiest to speak, the feelings we most love to express, die when we are commanded to utter them.

Ere long the young man ceased to invite his friends, to give parties or dinners; the house might have been shrouded in crape. A house where the mistress is a bigot has an atmosphere of its own. The servants, who are, of course, under her immediate control, are chosen among a class who call themselves pious, and who have an unmistakable physiognomy. Just as the jolliest fellow alive, when he joins the *gendarmerie,* has the countenance of a gendarme, so those who give themselves over to the practices of devotion acquire a uniform expression; the habit of lowering their eyes and preserving a sanctimonious mien clothes them in a livery of hypocrisy which rogues can affect to perfection.

And besides, bigots constitute a sort of republic; they all know each other; the servants they recommend and hand on from one to another are a race apart, and preserved by them, as horse-breeders will admit no animal into their stables that has not a pedigree. The more the impious—as they are thought—come to understand a household of bigots, the more

they perceive that everything is stamped with an indescribable squalor; they find there, at the same time, an appearance of avarice and mystery, as in a miser's home, and the dank scent of cold incense which gives a chill to the stale atmosphere of a chapel. This methodical meanness, this narrowness of thought, which is visible in every detail, can only be expressed by one word—Bigotry. In these sinister and pitiless houses Bigotry is written on the furniture, the prints, the pictures; speech is bigoted, the silence is bigoted, the faces are those of bigots. The transformation of men and things into bigotry is an inexplicable mystery, but the fact is evident. Everybody can see that bigots do not walk, do not sit, do not speak, as men of the world walk, sit, and speak. Under their roof every one is ill at ease, no one laughs, stiffness and formality infect everything, from the mistress' cap down to her pincushion; eyes are not honest, the folks move like shadows, and the lady of the house seems perched on a throne of ice.

One morning poor Granville discerned with grief and pain that all the symptoms of bigotry had invaded his home. There are in the world different spheres in which the same effects are seen though produced by dissimilar causes. Dulness hedges such miserable homes round with walls of brass, enclosing the horrors of the desert and the infinite void. The home is not so much a tomb as that far worse thing—a convent. In the centre of this icy sphere the lawyer could study his wife dispassionately. He observed, not without keen regret, the narrow-mindedness that stood confessed in the very way that her hair grew, low on the forehead, which was slightly depressed; he discovered in the perfect regularity of her features a certain set rigidity which before long made him hate the assumed sweetness that had bewitched him. Intuition told him that one day of disaster those thin lips might say, "My dear, it is for your good!"

Madame de Granville's complexion was acquiring a dull pallor and an austere expression that were a kill-joy to all who came near her. Was this change wrought by the ascetic habits of a pharisaism which is not piety any more than

avarice is economy? It would be hard to say. Beauty without expression is perhaps an imposture. This imperturbable set smile that the young wife always wore when she looked at Granville seemed to be a sort of Jesuitical formula of happiness, by which she thought to satisfy all the requirements of married life. Her charity was an offence, her soulless beauty was monstrous to those who knew her; the mildness of her speech was an irritation: she acted, not on feeling, but on duty.

There are faults which may yield in a wife to the stern lessons of experience, or to a husband's warnings; but nothing can counteract false ideas of religion. An eternity of happiness to be won, set in the scale against worldly enjoyment, triumphs over everything and makes every pang endurable. Is it not the apotheosis of egotism, of Self beyond the grave? Thus even the Pope was censured at the tribunal of the priest and the young devotee. To be always in the right is a feeling which absorbs every other in these tyrannous souls.

For some time past a secret struggle had been going on between the ideas of the husband and wife, and the young man was soon weary of a battle to which there could be no end. What man, what temper, can endure the sight of a hypocritically affectionate face and categorical resistance to his slightest wishes? What is to be done with a wife who takes advantage of his passion to protect her coldness, who seems determined on being blandly inexorable, prepares herself ecstatically to play the martyr, and looks on her husband as a scourge from God, a means of flagellation that may spare her the fires of purgatory? What picture can give an idea of these women who make virtue hateful by defying the gentle precepts of that faith which Saint John epitomized in the words, "Love one another"?

If there was a bonnet to be found in a milliner's shop that was condemned to remain in the window, or to be packed off to the colonies, Granville was certain to see it on his wife's head; if a material of bad color or hideous design were to be found, she would select it. These hapless bigots are heart-

breaking in their notions of dress. Want of taste is a defect inseparable from false pietism.

And so, in the home-life that needs the fullest sympathy, Granville had no true companionship. He went out alone to parties and the theatres. Nothing in his house appealed to him. A huge Crucifix that hung between his bed and Angélique's seemed figurative of his destiny. Does it not represent a murdered Divinity, a Man-God, done to death in all the prime of life and beauty? The ivory of that cross was less cold than Angélique crucifying her husband under the plea of virtue. This it was that lay at the root of their woes; the young wife saw nothing but duty where she should have given love. Here, one Ash Wednesday, rose the pale and spectral form of Fasting in Lent, of Total Abstinence, commanded in a severe tone—and Granville did not deem it advisable to write in his turn to the Pope and take the opinion of the Consistory on the proper way of observing Lent, the Ember days, and the eve of great festivals.

His misfortune was too great! He could not even complain, for what could he say? He had a pretty young wife attached to her duties, virtuous—nay, a model of all the virtues. She had a child every year, nursed them herself, and brought them up in the highest principles. Being charitable, Angélique was promoted to rank as an angel. The old women who constituted the circle in which she moved—for at that time it was not yet "the thing" for young women to be religious as a matter of fashion—all admired Madame de Granville's piety, and regarded her, not indeed as a virgin, but as a martyr. They blamed not the wife's scruples, but the barbarous philoprogenitiveness of the husband.

Granville, by insensible degrees, overdone with work, bereft of conjugal consolations, and weary of a world in which he wandered alone, by the time he was two-and-thirty had sunk into the Slough of Despond. He hated life. Having too lofty a notion of the responsibilities imposed on him by his position to set the example of a dissipated life, he tried to deaden feeling by hard study, and began a great book on Law.

But he was not allowed to enjoy the monastic peace he had hoped for. When the celestial Angélique saw him desert worldly society to work at home with such regularity, she tried to convert him. It had been a real sorrow to her to know that her husband's opinions were not strictly Christian; and she sometimes wept as she reflected that if her husband should die it would be in a state of final impenitence, so that she could not hope to snatch him from the eternal fires of Hell. Thus Granville was the mark for the mean ideas, the vacuous arguments, the narrow views by which his wife—fancying she had achieved the first victory—tried to gain a second by bringing him back within the pale of the Church.

This was the last straw. What can be more intolerable than the blind struggle in which the obstinacy of a bigot tries to meet the acumen of a lawyer? What more terrible to endure than the acrimonious pin-pricks to which a passionate soul prefers a dagger-thrust? Granville neglected his home. Everything there was unendurable. His children, broken by their mother's frigid despotism, dared not go with him to the play; indeed, Granville could never give them any pleasure without bringing down punishment from their terrible mother. His loving nature was weaned to indifference, to a selfishness worse than death. His boys, indeed, he saved from this hell by sending them to school at an early age, and insisting on his right to train them. He rarely interfered between his wife and her daughters; but he was resolved that they should marry as soon as they were old enough.

Even if he had wished to take violent measures, he could have found no justification; his wife, backed by a formidable army of dowagers, would have had him condemned by the whole world. Thus Granville had no choice but to live in complete isolation; but, crushed under the tyranny of misery, he could not himself bear to see how altered he was by grief and toil. And he dreaded any connection or intimacy with women of the world, having no hope of finding any consolation.

The improving history of this melancholy household gave rise to no events worthy of record during the fifteen years between 1806 and 1825. Madame de Granville was exactly the same after losing her husband's affection as she had been during the time when she called herself happy. She paid for Masses, beseeching God and the Saints to enlighten her as to what the faults were which displeased her husband, and to show her the way to restore the erring sheep; but the more fervent her prayers, the less was Granville to be seen at home.

For about five years now, having achieved a high position as a judge, Granville had occupied the *entresol* of the house to avoid living with the Comtesse de Granville. Every morning a little scene took place, which, if evil tongues are to be believed, is repeated in many households as the result of incompatibility of temper, of moral or physical malady, or of antagonisms leading to such disaster as is recorded in this history. At about eight in the morning a housekeeper, bearing no small resemblance to a nun, rang at the Comte de Granville's door. Admitted to the room next to the Judge's study, she always repeated the same message to the footman, and always in the same tone:

"Madame would be glad to know whether Monsieur le Comte has had a good night, and if she is to have the pleasure of his company at breakfast."

"Monsieur presents his compliments to Madame la Comtesse," the valet would say, after speaking with his master, "and begs her to hold him excused; important business compels him to be in court this morning."

A minute later the woman reappeared and asked on madame's behalf whether she would have the pleasure of seeing Monsieur le Comte before he went out.

"He is gone," was always the reply, though often his carriage was still waiting.

This little dialogue by proxy became a daily ceremonial. Granville's servant, a favorite with his master, and the cause of more than one quarrel over his irreligious and dissipated conduct, would even go into his master's room, as a matter of

form, when the Count was not there, and come back with the same formula in reply.

The aggrieved wife was always on the watch for her husband's return, and standing on the steps so as to meet him like an embodiment of remorse. The petty aggressiveness which lies at the root of the monastic temper was the foundation of Madame de Granville's; she was now five-and-thirty, and looked forty. When the Count was compelled by decency to speak to his wife or to dine at home, she was only too well pleased to inflict her company upon him, with her acid-sweet remarks and the intolerable dulness of her narrow-minded circle, and she tried to put him in the wrong before the servants and her charitable friends.

When, at this time, the post of President in a provincial court was offered to the Comte de Granville, who was in high favor, he begged to be allowed to remain in Paris. This refusal, of which the Keeper of the Seals alone knew the reasons, gave rise to extraordinary conjectures on the part of the Countess' intimate friends and of her director. Granville, a rich man with a hundred thousand francs a year, belonged to one of the first families of Normandy. His appointment to be Presiding Judge would have been the stepping-stone to a peer's seat; whence this strange lack of ambition? Why had he given up his great book on Law? What was the meaning of the dissipation which for nearly six years had made him a stranger to his home, his family, his study, to all he ought to hold dear? The Countess' confessor, who based his hopes of a bishopric quite as much on the families he governed as on the services he rendered to an association of which he was an ardent propagator, was much disappointed by Granville's refusal, and tried to insinuate calumnious explanations: "If Monsieur le Comte had such an objection to provincial life, it was perhaps because he dreaded finding himself under the necessity of leading a regular life, compelled to set an example of moral conduct, and to live with the Countess, from whom nothing could have alienated him but some illicit connection; for how could a woman so pure as Madame de Granville ever

tolerate the disorderly life into which her husband had drifted?" The sanctimonious women accepted as facts these hints, which unluckily were not merely hypothetical, and Madame de Granville was stricken as by a thunderbolt.

Angélique, knowing nothing of the world, of love and its follies, was so far from conceiving of any conditions of married life unlike those that had alienated her husband as possible, that she believed him to be incapable of the errors which are crimes in the eyes of any wife. When the Count ceased to demand anything of her, she imagined that the tranquillity he now seemed to enjoy was in the course of nature; and, as she had really given to him all the love which her heart was capable of feeling for a man, while the priest's conjectures were the utter destruction of the illusions she had hitherto cherished, she defended her husband; at the same time, she could not eradicate the suspicion that had been so ingeniously sown in her soul.

These alarms wrought such havoc in her feeble brain that they made her ill; she was worn by low fever. These incidents took place during Lent 1822; she would not pretermit her austerities, and fell into a decline that put her life in danger. Granville's indifference was added torture; his care and attention were such as a nephew feels himself bound to give to some old uncle.

Though the Countess had given up her persistent nagging and remonstrances, and tried to receive her husband with affectionate words, the sharpness of the bigot showed through, and one speech would often undo the work of a week.

Towards the end of May, the warm breath of spring, and more nourishing diet than her Lenten fare, restored Madame de Granville to a little strength. One morning, on coming home from Mass, she sat down on a stone bench in the little garden, where the sun's kisses reminded her of the early days of her married life, and she looked back across the years to see wherein she might have failed in her duty as a wife and mother. She was broken in upon by the Abbé Fontanon in an almost indescribable state of excitement.

"Has any misfortune befallen you, Father?" she asked with filial solicitude.

"Ah! I only wish," cried the Normandy priest, "that all the woes inflicted on you by the hand of God were dealt out to me; but, my admirable friend, there are trials to which you can but bow."

"Can any worse punishments await me than those with which Providence crushes me by making my husband the instrument of His wrath?"

"You must prepare yourself, daughter, to yet worse mischief than we and your pious friends had ever conceived of."

"Then I may thank God," said the Countess, "for vouchsafing to use you as the messenger of His will, and thus, as ever, setting the treasures of mercy by the side of the scourges of His wrath, just as in bygone days He showed a spring to Hagar when He had driven her into the desert."

"He measures your sufferings by the strength of your resignation and the weight of your sins."

"Speak; I am ready to hear!" As she said it she cast her eyes up to heaven. "Speak, Monseiur Fontanon."

"For seven years Monsieur Granville has lived in sin with a concubine, by whom he has two children; and on this adulterous connection he has spent more than five hundred thousand francs, which ought to have been the property of his legitimate family."

"I must see it to believe it!" cried the Countess.

"Far be it from you!" exclaimed the Abbé. "You must forgive, my daughter, and wait in patience and prayer till God enlightens your husband; unless, indeed, you choose to adopt against him the means offered you by human laws."

The long conversation that ensued between the priest and his penitent resulted in an extraordinary change in the Countess; she abruptly dismissed him, called her servants, who were alarmed at her flushed face and crazy energy. She ordered her carriage—countermanded it—changed her mind twenty times in the hour; but at last, at about three o'clock, as if she had come to some great determination, she went out,

leaving the whole household in amazement at such a sudden transformation.

"Is the Count coming home to dinner?" she asked of his servant, to whom she never would speak.

"No, madame."

"Did you go with him to the Courts this morning?"

"Yes, madame."

"And to-day is Monday?"

"Yes, madame."

"Then do the Courts sit on Mondays nowadays?"

"Devil take you!" cried the man, as his mistress drove off after saying to the coachman:

"Rue Taitbout."

Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille was weeping: Roger, sitting by her side, held one of her hands between his own. He was silent, looking by turns at little Charles—who, not understanding his mother's grief, stood speechless at the sight of her tears—at the cot where Eugénie lay sleeping, and Caroline's face, on which grief had the effect of rain falling across the beams of cheerful sunshine.

"Yes, my darling," said Roger, after a long silence, "that is the great secret: I am married. But some day I hope we may form but one family. My wife has been given over ever since last March. I do not wish her dead; still, if it should please God to take her to Himself, I believe she will be happier in Paradise than in a world to whose griefs and pleasures she is equally indifferent."

"How I hate that woman! How could she bear to make you unhappy? And yet it is to that happiness that I owe my happiness!"

Her tears suddenly ceased.

"Caroline, let us hope," cried Roger. "Do not be frightened by anything that priest may have said to you. Though my wife's confessor is a man to be feared for his power in the congregation, if he should try to blight our happiness I would find means——"

"What could you do?"

"We would go to Italy; I would fly——"

A shriek that rang out from the adjoining room made Roger start and Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille quake; but she rushed into the drawing-room, and there found Madame de Granville in a dead faint. When the Countess recovered her senses, she sighed deeply on finding herself supported by the Count and her rival, whom she instinctively pushed away with a gesture of contempt. Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille rose to withdraw.

"You are at home, madame," said Granville, taking Caroline by the arm. "Stay."

The Judge took up his wife in his arms, carried her to the carriage, and got into it with her.

"Who is it that has brought you to the point of wishing me dead, of resolving to fly?" asked the Countess, looking at her husband with grief mingled with indignation. "Was I not young? you thought me pretty—what fault have you to find with me? Have I been false to you? Have not I been a virtuous and well-conducted wife? My heart has cherished no image but yours, my ears have listened to no other voice. What duty have I failed in? What have I ever denied you?"

"Happiness, madame," said the Count severely. "You know, madame, that there are two ways of serving God. Some Christians imagine that by going to church at fixed hours to say a *Paternoster*, by attending Mass regularly and avoiding sin, they may win heaven—but they, madame, will go to hell; they have not loved God for Himself, they have not worshiped Him as He chooses to be worshiped, they have made no sacrifice. Though mild in seeming, they are hard on their neighbors; they see the law, the letter, not the spirit.—This is how you have treated me, your earthly husband; you have sacrificed my happiness to your salvation; you were always absorbed in prayer when I came to you in gladness of heart; you wept when you should have cheered my toil; you have never tried to satisfy any demands I have made on you."

"And if they were wicked," cried the Countess hotly, "was I to lose my soul to please you?"

"It is a sacrifice which another, a more loving woman, has dared to make," said Granville coldly.

"Dear God!" she cried, bursting into tears, "Thou hearest! Has he been worthy of the prayers and penance I have lived in, wearing myself out to atone for his sins and my own?—Of what avail is virtue?"

"To win Heaven, my dear. A woman cannot be at the same time the wife of a man and the spouse of Christ. That would be bigamy; she must choose between a husband and a nunnery. For the sake of future advantage you have stripped your soul of all the love, all the devotion, which God commands that you should have for me, you have cherished no feeling but hatred——"

"Have I not loved you?" she put in.

"No, madame."

"Then what is love?" the Countess involuntarily inquired.

"Love, my dear," replied Granville, with a sort of ironical surprise, "you are incapable of understanding it. The cold sky of Normandy is not that of Spain. This difference of climate is no doubt the secret of our disaster.—To yield to our caprices, to guess them, to find pleasure in pain, to sacrifice the world's opinion, your pride, your religion even, and still regard these offerings as mere grains of incense burnt in honor of the idol—that is love——"

"The love of ballet-girls!" cried the Countess in horror. "Such flames cannot last, and must soon leave nothing but ashes and cinders, regret or despair. A wife ought, in my opinion, to bring you true friendship, equable warmth——"

"You speak of warmth as negroes speak of ice," retorted the Count, with a sardonic smile. "Consider that the humblest daisy has more charms than the proudest and most gorgeous of the red hawthorns that attract us in spring by their strong scent and brilliant color.—At the same time," he went on, "I will do you justice. You have kept so precisely in the straight path of imaginary duty prescribed by law, that only to make

you understand wherein you have failed towards me, I should be obliged to enter into details which would offend your dignity, and instruct you in matters which would seem to you to undermine all morality."

"And you dare to speak of morality when you have but just left the house where you have dissipated your children's fortune in debaucheries?" cried the Countess, maddened by her husband's reticence.

"There, madame, I must correct you," said the Count, coolly interrupting his wife. "Though Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille is rich, it is at nobody's expense. My uncle was master of his fortune, and had several heirs. In his lifetime, and out of pure friendship, regarding her as his niece, he gave her the little estate of Bellefeuille. As for anything else, I owe it to his liberality——"

"Such conduct is only worthy of a Jacobin!" said the sanctimonious Angélique.

"Madame, you are forgetting that your own father was one of the Jacobins whom you scorn so uncharitably," said the Count severely. "Citizen Bontems was signing death-warrants at a time when my uncle was doing France good service."

Madame de Granville was silenced. But after a short pause, the remembrance of what she had just seen reawakened in her soul the jealousy which nothing can kill in a woman's heart, and she murmured, as if to herself—"How can a woman thus destroy her own soul and that of others?"

"Bless me, madame," replied the Count, tired of this dialogue, "you yourself may some day have to answer that question." The Countess was scared. "You perhaps will be held excused by the merciful Judge, who will weigh our sins," he went on, "in consideration of the conviction with which you have worked out my misery. I do not hate you—I hate those who have perverted your heart and your reason. You have prayed for me, just as Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille has given me her heart and crowned my life with love. You should have been my mistress and the prayerful saint by turns.—Do me the justice to confess that I am no reprobate, no debauchee.

My life was cleanly. Alas! after seven years of wretchedness, the craving for happiness led me by an imperceptible descent to love another woman and make a second home. And do not imagine that I am singular; there are in this city thousands of husbands, all led by various causes to live this twofold life."

"Great God!" cried the Countess. "How heavy is the cross Thou hast laid on me to bear! If the husband Thou hast given me here below in Thy wrath can only be made happy through my death, take me to Thyself!"

"If you had always breathed such admirable sentiments and such devotion, we should be happy yet," said the Count coldly.

"Indeed," cried Angélique, melting into a flood of tears, "forgive me if I have done any wrong. Yes, monsieur, I am ready to obey you in all things, feeling sure that you will desire nothing but what is just and natural; henceforth I will be all you can wish your wife to be."

"If your purpose, madame, is to compel me to say that I no longer love you, I shall find the cruel courage to tell you so. Can I command my heart? Can I wipe out in an instant the traces of fifteen years of suffering?—I have ceased to love.—These words contain a mystery as deep as lies the words *I love.* Esteem, respect, friendship may be won, lost, regained; but as to love—I might school myself for a thousand years, and it would not blossom again, especially for a woman too old to respond to it."

"I hope, Monsieur le Comte, I sincerely hope, that such words may not be spoken to you some day by the woman you love, and in such a tone and accent——"

"Will you put on a dress *à la Grecque* this evening, and come to the Opera?"

The shudder with which the Countess received the suggestion was a mute reply.

Early in December 1833, a man, whose perfectly white hair and worn features seemed to show that he was aged by grief rather than by years, was walking at midnight along the Rue Gaillon. Having reached a house of modest appearance, and only two stories high, he paused to look up at one of the attic windows that pierced the roof at regular intervals. A dim light scarcely showed through the humble panes, some of which had been repaired with paper. The man below was watching the wavering glimmer with the vague curiosity of a Paris idler, when a young man came out of the house. As the light of the street lamp fell full on the face of the first comer, it will not seem surprising that, in spite of the darkness, this young man went towards the passer-by, though with the hesitancy that is usual when we have any fear of making a mistake in recognizing an acquaintance.

"What, is it you," cried he, "Monsieur le Président? Alone at this hour, and so far from the Rue Saint-Lazare. Allow me to have the honor of giving you my arm.—The pavement is so greasy this morning, that if we do not hold each other up," he added, to soothe the elder man's susceptibilities, "we shall find it hard to escape a tumble."

"But, my dear sir, I am no more than fifty-five, unfortunately for me," replied the Comte de Granville. "A physician of your celebrity must know that at that age a man is still hale and strong."

"Then you are in waiting on a lady, I suppose," replied Horace Bianchon. "You are not, I imagine, in the habit of going about Paris on foot. When a man keeps such fine horses——"

"Still, when I am not visiting in the evening, I commonly return from the Courts or the club on foot," replied the Count.

"And with large sums of money about you, perhaps!" cried the doctor. "It is a positive invitation to the assassin's knife."

"I am not afraid of that," said Granville, with melancholy indifference.

"But, at least, do not stand about," said the doctor, leading the Count towards the boulevard. "A little more and I shall

believe that you are bent on robbing me of your last illness, and dying by some other hand than mine."

"You caught me playing the spy," said the Count. "Whether on foot or in a carriage, and at whatever hour of the night I may come by, I have for some time past observed at a window on the third floor of your house the shadow of a person who seems to work with heroic constancy."

The Count paused as if he felt some sudden pain. "And I take as great an interest in that garret," he went on, "as a citizen of Paris must feel in the finishing of the Palais Royal."

"Well," said Horace Bianchon eagerly, "I can tell you ——"

"Tell me nothing," replied Granville, cutting the doctor short. "I would not give a centime to know whether the shadow that moves across that shabby blind is that of a man or a woman, nor whether the inhabitant of that attic is happy or miserable. Though I was surprised to see no one at work there this evening, and though I stopped to look, it was solely for the pleasure of indulging in conjectures as numerous and as idiotic as those of idlers who see a building left half finished. For nine years, my young——" the Count hesitated to use a word; then he waved his hand, exclaiming—"No, I will not say friend—I hate everything that savors of sentiment.—Well, for nine years past I have ceased to wonder that old men amuse themselves with growing flowers and planting trees; the events of life have taught them disbelief in all human affection; and I grew old within a few days. I will no longer attach myself to any creature but to unreasoning animals, or plants, or superficial things. I think more of Taglioni's grace than of all human feeling. I abhor life and the world in which I live alone. Nothing, nothing," he went on, in a tone that startled the younger man, "no, nothing can move or interest me."

"But you have children?"

"My children!" he repeated bitterly. "Yes—well, is not my eldest daughter the Comtesse de Vandenesse? The other will, through her sister's connections, make some good match.

As to my sons, have they not succeeded? The Viscount was public prosecutor at Limoges, and is now President of the Court at Orléans; the younger is public prosecutor in Paris.—My children have their own cares, their own anxieties and business to attend to. If of all those hearts one had been devoted to me, if one had tried by entire affection to fill up the void I have here," and he struck his breast, "well, that one would have failed in life, have sacrificed it to me. And why should he? Why? To bring sunshine into my few remaining years—and would he have succeeded? Might I not have accepted such generosity as a debt? But, doctor," and the Count smiled with deep irony, "it is not for nothing that we teach them arithmetic and how to count. At this moment perhaps they are waiting for my money."

"O Monsieur le Comte, how could such an idea enter your head—you who are kind, friendly, and humane! Indeed, if I were not myself a living proof of the benevolence you exercise so liberally and so nobly——"

"To please myself," replied the Count. "I pay for a sensation, as I would to-morrow pay a pile of gold to recover the most childish illusion that would but make my heart glow.—I help my fellow-creatures for my own sake, just as I gamble; and I look for gratitude from none. I should see you die without blinking; and I beg of you to feel the same with regard to me. I tell you, young man, the events of life have swept over my heart like the lavas of Vesuvius over Herculaneum. The town is there—dead."

"Those who have brought a soul as warm and as living as yours was to such a pitch of indifference are indeed guilty!"

"Say no more," said the Count, with a shudder of aversion.

"You have a malady which you ought to allow me to treat," said Bianchon in a tone of deep emotion.

"What, do you know of a cure for death?" cried the Count irritably.

"I undertake, Monsieur le Comte, to revive the heart you believe to be frozen."

"Are you a match for Talma, then?" asked the Count satirically.

"No, Monsieur le Comte. But Nature is as far above Talma as Talma is superior to me.—Listen: the garret you are interested in is inhabited by a woman of about thirty, and in her love is carried to fanaticism. The object of her adoration is a young man of pleasing appearance, but endowed by some malignant fairy with every conceivable vice. This fellow is a gambler, and it is hard to say which he is most addicted to—wine or women; he has, to my knowledge, committed acts deserving punishment by law. Well, and to him this unhappy woman sacrificed a life of ease, a man who worshiped her, and the father of her children.—But what is wrong, Monsieur le Comte?"

"Nothing. Go on."

"She has allowed him to squander a perfect fortune; she would, I believe, give him the world if she had it; she works night and day; and many a time she has, without a murmur, seen the wretch she adores rob her even of the money saved to buy the clothes the children need, and their food for the morrow. Only three days ago she sold her hair, the finest hair I ever saw; he came in, she could not hide the gold piece quickly enough, and he asked her for it. For a smile, for a kiss, she gave up the price of a fortnight's life and peace. Is it not dreadful, and yet sublime?—But work is wearing her cheeks hollow. Her children's crying has broken her heart; she is ill, and at this moment moaning on her wretched bed. This evening they had nothing to eat; the children have not strength to cry, they were silent when I went up."

Horace Bianchon stood still. Just then the Comte de Granville, in spite of himself, as it were, had put his hand into his waistcoat pocket.

"I can guess, my young friend, how it is that she is yet alive if you attend her," said the elder man.

"O poor soul!" cried the doctor, "who could refuse to help her? I only wish I were richer, for I hope to cure her of her passion."

"But how can you expect me to pity a form of misery of which the joys to me would seem cheaply purchased with my

whole fortune!" exclaimed the Count, taking his hand out of his pocket empty of the notes which Bianchon had supposed his patron to be feeling for. "That woman feels, she is alive! Would not Louis XV. have given his kingdom to rise from the grave and have three days of youth and life! And is not that the history of thousands of dead men, thousands of sick men, thousands of old men?"

"Poor Caroline!" cried Bianchon.

As he heard the name the Count shuddered, and grasped the doctor's arm with the grip of an iron vise, as it seemed to Bianchon.

"Her name is Caroline Crochard?" asked the President, in a voice that was evidently broken.

"Then you know her?" said the doctor, astonished.

"And the wretch's name is Solvet.—Ay, you have kept your word!" exclaimed Granville; "you have roused my heart to the most terrible pain it can suffer till it is dust. That emotion, too, is a gift from hell, and I always know how to pay those debts."

By this time the Count and the doctor had reached the corner of the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. One of those night-birds who wander round with a basket on their back and crook in hand, and were, during the Revolution, facetiously called the Committee of Research, was standing by the curbstone where the two men now stopped. This scavenger had a shriveled face worthy of those immortalized by Charlet in his caricatures of the sweepers of Paris.

"Do you ever pick up a thousand-franc note?"

"Now and then, master."

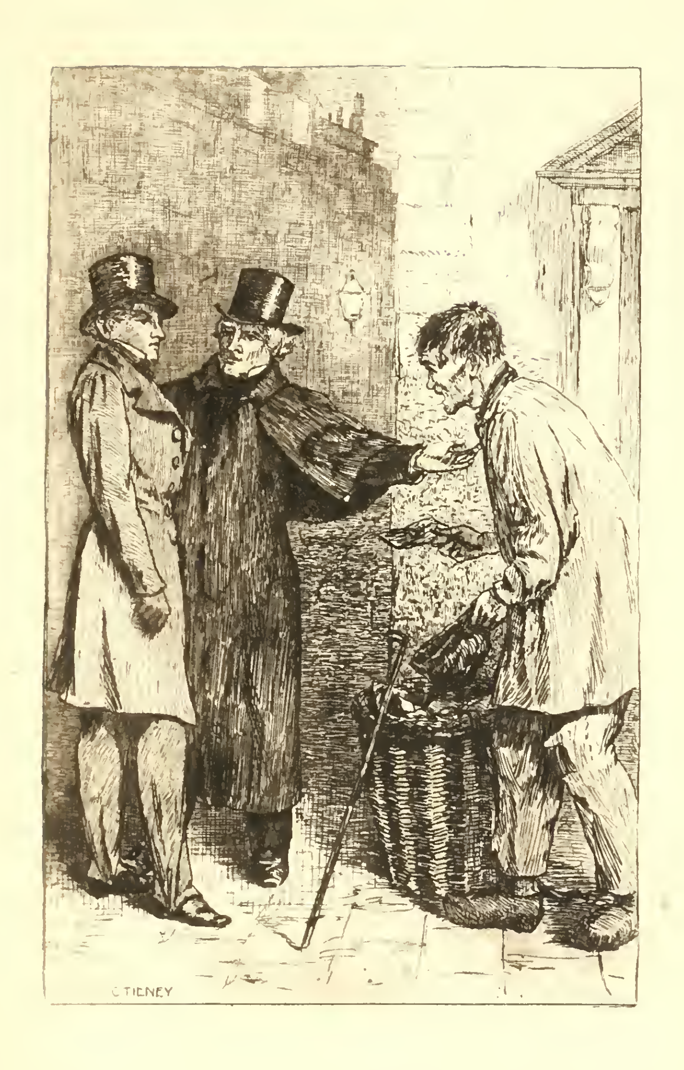
"And you restore them?"

"It depends on the reward offered."

"You're the man for me," cried the Count, giving the man a thousand-franc note. "Take this, but, remember, I give it you on condition of your spending it at the wineshop, of your getting drunk, fighting, beating your wife, blacking your friends' eyes. That will give work to the watch, the surgeon, the druggist—perhaps to the police, the public prosecutor, the



"You're the man for me," cried the count



judge, and the prison warders. Do not try to do anything else, or the devil will be revenged on you sooner or later."

A draughtsman would need at once the pencil of Charlet and of Callot, the brush of Teniers and of Rembrandt, to give a true notion of this night-scene.

"Now I have squared accounts with hell, and had some pleasure for my money," said the Count in a deep voice, pointing out the indescribable physiognomy of the gaping scavenger to the doctor, who stood stupefied. "As for Caroline Crochard!—she may die of hunger and thirst, hearing the heart-rending shrieks of her starving children, and convinced of the baseness of the man she loves. I will not give a sou to rescue her; and because you have helped her, I will see you no more ——"

The Count left Bianchon standing like a statue, and walked as briskly as a young man to the Rue Saint-Lazare, soon reaching the little house where he resided, and where, to his surprise, he found a carriage waiting at the door.

"Monsieur, your son, the attorney-general, came about an hour since," said the man-servant, "and is waiting for you in your bedroom."

Granville signed to the man to leave him.

"What motive can be strong enough to require you to infringe the order I have given my children never to come to me unless I send for them?" asked the Count of his son as he went into the room.

"Father," replied the younger man in a tremulous voice, and with great respect, "I venture to hope that you will forgive me when you have heard me."

"Your reply is proper," said the Count. "Sit down," and he pointed to a chair. "But whether I walk up and down, or take a seat, speak without heeding me."

"Father," the son went on, "this afternoon, at four o'clock, a very young man who was arrested in the house of a friend of mine, whom he had robbed to a considerable extent, appealed to you.—He says he is your son."

"His name?" asked the Count hoarsely.

"Charles Crochard."

"That will do," said the father, with an imperious wave of the hand.

Granville paced the room in solemn silence, and his son took care not to break it.

"My son," he began, and the words were pronounced in a voice so mild and fatherly, that the young lawyer started, "Charles Crochard spoke the truth.—I am glad you came to me to-night, my good Eugène," he added. "Here is a considerable sum of money"—and he gave him a bundle of bank-notes—"you can make any use of them you think proper in this matter. I trust you implicitly, and approve beforehand whatever arrangements you may make, either in the present or for the future.—Eugène, my dear son, kiss me. We part perhaps for the last time. I shall to-morrow crave my dismissal from the King, and I am going to Italy.

"Though a father owes no account of his life to his children, he is bound to bequeath to them the experience Fate sells him so dearly—is it not a part of their inheritance?—When you marry," the Count went on, with a little involuntary shudder, "do not undertake it lightly; that act is the most important of all those which society requires of us. Remember to study at your leisure the character of the woman who is to be your partner; but consult me too, I will judge of her myself. A lack of union between husband and wife, from whatever cause, leads to terrible misfortune; sooner or later we are always punished for contravening the social law.—But I will write to you on this subject from Florence. A father who has the honor of presiding over a supreme court of justice must not have to blush in the presence of his son. Good-bye."

Paris, *February* 1830—*January* 1842.